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The Collected Works of
Arthur Symons

Volume 2

Poems

Poems: Volume Two

by Arthur Symons

1 9 2 4

London: Martin Secker

Printed in Great Britain
London: Martin Secker (Ltd.), 1924

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IMAGES OF GOOD AND EVIL

THE DANCE OF THE SEVEN SINS

THE BODY

CALL in the dancers.

THE SOUL

All is vain.
We live, and living is the pain
We die of while we live. The earth
Was made in some celestial mirth,
Not for our pleasure. I, who seem
To have some memory of a dream,
I know not when, I know not where,
Dream not, remember, and despair.

THE BODY

Dream always, and remember not.
I, if I dreamed, have yet forgot
Even the sleep. This hour I hold
A sand-glass dropping sands of gold.
Call in the dancers, for they give
Bonds to the moment fugitive,
Wings to the moment slow to pass ;
I shake the hours in the hour-glass,
Bid the hours dance with you to-night,
My dancers, spirits of delight !

LUST

I give to man, who is the dust,
Life, and his breath: he calls me Lust.
I am Love's elder; Love was born
To be the world's delight and scorn,
That man might veil, his sight being dim,
My own infinity in him.
Yet without me, that swiftly move,
In all things, the indwelling love
Were as a song without a voice;
By me the utmost heavens rejoice
At the achievement, in pure fire,
Of their own uttermost desire.
I am in man that flame of flames
He names by God's most sacred names,
Being creation, and from thence
A sleepless, vast omnipotence,
And an eternal fatherhood.
Without me nothing is seen good,
Nothing seen great, nor is there gained
The hope of aught to be attained,
Nor that fine, fiery speed of thought
By which the ends of the world are brought
Together in a wish. I give
More than life holds to all who live,
Being that desire which grants men strength
To endure with joy the utmost length
Of an intolerable way.
Night follows night, day follows day.
And, if I lead, hope flies with me

Across the white hills of the sea,
Across the wavering green lands.
I hold within my subtle hands
The promise of all worlds ; there come
To conquest and to martyrdom
At my indifferent, swift feet
All lovers, who astonished meet :
The pale saint, famishing for God,
The pallid virgin who has trod
The way not of virginity
Unto some alien ecstasy ;
A shepherd with his shepherdess ;
Kings, who have loved the purple less
Than some grey rags about the hem
Of a beggar-maid that passed by them ;
Tortured and torturer, the smile
Still gasping in their lips the while
Their fingers quiver ; and the proud
Lover whom love's hard bond allowed
Not even the release of speech.
I, to all these, am all in each,
Though most deny me, few receive
The half of all I have to give.
Aspire unto my Calvary ;
Few are there that have come thereby.
These are my saints, my own, my sons,
Chosen among my chosen ones
To be my priests serving the fire
Which on mine altars is desire
Of the impossible, the breath
Of a seven times renascent death

Of those delights ineffable,
Which, beyond utmost heaven, are hell.
Come near: these things are mysteries:
Come near, who with the spirit's eyes
Dare to behold, and can refine
Your senses to that crystalline
Ardour of the pure fire of love,
Where, beyond hell enjoyed, above
Heaven's ample, utmost lack forgiven,
Heaven over heaven, there is yet heaven.
It was the lust of God, fulfilled
With joys enjoyed, that bade him build
The wanton palace of the earth.
And of that memorable mirth
Which shook the stars upon that day
Some broken echoes drift our way
In any laughter of the grape.
How can Infinity escape
The horror of infinity,
If not by lust that there shall be
Some new, untried, most finite thing
Enjoyed without remembering
That all things else, being enjoyed,
Have perfectly filled full that void
Which is infinity possessed?
So, for those seven days, God had rest,
In that seven times delightful toil,
Creation, from the serpent's coil
Of his own wisdom binding him.
Have I not been God's seraphim?

SLOTH

These garlands tire me : I am Sloth.
See, in my hair these roses, both
The bracelets heavy on my wrists,
The languor of these amethysts
Chained to my ears with chains of gold,
The Tyrian webs whose downy fold
Droops on my bosom like dull sleep.
Let me but slumber : for I keep
The keys of that unwavering realm
Whose gates not Time shall overwhelm,
Whose shadowy temples no God may,
Though younger born, behold decay.
Come near, O sons of men, come near,
Come without hope, come without fear,
I am that happiness you dread ;
Within the curtains of my bed
A twilight moves with happy sighs,
And dreams shall cover your closed eyes
Softer than darkness ; plumy wings
Swifter than thoughts of hapless things,
And fragrant with the breath of peace.
Come, let these subtle hands release
Your foreheads tightened with the cords
Of wrinkled wisdom ; O grey lords
Of Time's inherited disgrace,
Come, make this heart your dwelling-place.
My lips are warm, because I drowse
All day within a pleasant house ;
Wandering odours come and go,

They are the souls of flowers that grow
Too faint with ecstasy to live ;
And sounds more frail and fugitive
Than rose-leaf dropping rainy tears
On rose-leaf, fill with delicate fears
The silence listening found my feet.
To me this moment is more sweet
Than any moment I have tired
My soul with having once desired,
Or any moment yet to be,
Delight being infinity.
I have no will to be more wise,
To be more comely in men's eyes,
To be more loved of one who may
Love more than he who loves to-day,
Or to love more than now I love.
I cross my folded arms above
A heart that in remembering
Remembers no unquiet thing ;
A heart fulfilled with the intense
Acceptance of that indolence
Which God the seventh day understood,
Proclaiming all things very good.
Love me, and I am satisfied
To be the soul's delighted bride,
To all love's ardours virginal.
Love me, or love me not at all,
And I am well content at heart
To sleep in some soft place apart,
Lonely as in a garden-close
Slumbers the solitary rose.

I am the wine within the cup,
Body and soul have I drained up,
Unbounded, unconsumed, and void,
Myself within myself enjoyed,
Being myself that loneliness
Which is the pain of beauty, less
Than beauty's vast, presumptuous mirth
Shaken like a flag above the earth.

AVARICE

I hoard the moments love lets slip,
The dregs that any feaster's lip
Rejects within the cup of life,
The shadows of the fleeting strife
Of colours, and the echoing
Of every half-muttered thing ;
The faint dust shaken from the feet
Of Joy's forerunners in the street,
The knowledge dropt, some heedless day,
By Wisdom passing on her way,
The vows that lovers in a kiss
Have perjured : I am Avarice.
Always I walk with downcast eyes,
Lest, looking at the empty skies,
Wherein no treasure may be found,
I pass some poor thing on the ground.
My robes are ample, fold on fold,
That I may gather in, and hold,
And let not one escape from me,
All treasures of earth's treasury.

Also I walk with lingering pace,
Since, when mine eyes behold the grace
And glory whereof earth is full,
And how the world is beautiful,
Infinitely, and everywhere,
Then my desire is as the air
Embracing all things that exist.
All kisses that all lips have kissed
My lips are covetous that none
Escape them ; fondly, one by one,
My heart remembers every word
Of love that ever lover heard,
And hearkening I shall hoard away
All words that lovers shall yet say,
Saying to myself : All these are mine.
Gold too I love : two things divine
Among all delicate things I hold,
Gold even as love, love even as gold,
Neither of them the fairer thing.
But always, in my bargaining,
I would fain buy, and never sell.
It irks me, howsoever well
I bargain, to make bargain of
A pale and timid word of love
For any jewel of pure gold ;
The little timid word may hold
(Who knows ?) in its infinity
The small dust that may haply be
Dust of imperishable earth.
I think, within the whole world's girth,
There is no beauty I can pass,

For anything that ever was
May yet be mine: but for that thought
All beauty were to me as nought.
I love to follow, stride for stride,
The footsteps of my sister Pride,
For Pride with both hands flings away
Unhandled treasures. On her way
I follow Anger also: she
With one hand scatters heedlessly
The gifts that all her lovers give,
But spoilt and broken. I shall live
To old age, for my both hands cling
To Life for all her hurrying.
Only one thing on earth I dread,
The grave; for in that narrow bed
But little treasure-room afford
The gaps 'twixt board and coffin-board.
I shall go down into that pit
Despoiled, for at the door of it,
Life, standing up against the sun,
Shall take my treasures one by one,
Leaving me only, for my part,
A little love within my heart,
A little wisdom in my brain:
The worms of these shall have their gain;
When these have had their gain of me
Where then shall all my treasures be?

GLUTTONY

My robes were coloured in the lees
Of those first Roman vintages

That crushed the whole world's glory up
Into one Imperial cup,
The later heavens with dew empearled.
I drink the glory of the world,
As an ox drains a small pool dry:
So passes the world's glory by.
And as an ox makes haste to eat
The meadow-grass beneath his feet,
I eat the glory that may pass
With the world's life and death of grass.
All flesh is grass: shall I assuage
My hunger with the pasturage
Of all earth's valleys, or my thirst
With every rock-born stream that burst
Each cloud-barred, starry mountain-gate?
Surely the valleys shall not sate
My hunger, nor the rainy hills
The thirst that like the salt sea fills
My longing to its hollow shore.
I thirst immortally for more
Than mortal fruits; if I could take
The world as a ripe fruit, and slake
All thirsts at once, have I not dreamed
Of other, unknown fruits that seemed
More delicate than this gross fruit
Whereof the graveyards know the root?
O fruit of dreams, my teeth have met,
Only in dreams, in your red, wet,
Martyred, and ever bleeding heart!
When shall I find you, and what part
Of your bewildering ecstasy

Possess ? and what, possessing me,
Shall wholly from my sight remove
The intolerable fruit of love ?
This is the fruit that God, in wrath,
Planted upon a garden-path
Where man and woman walked in peace ;
And of this fruit the sad increase
Shall end not till the whole world end ;
For with the apple did God send
The hot desire of it, and then
The cold rejection, and again
Search, and entreaty, and despair ;
This apple hovers in the air
Before the lips of all that live ;
I have desired it, and would give
Desire of every earthly wine
That has, in any hour, been mine,
For this that has and has not been.
Often the apple will be green,
Often it will be yellowing
Unto a late, sad, rotten thing ;
And always, as it was before,
It will be bitter at the core,
And bitter in the skin. Yet, taste
This fruit of Eden in the waste
Of a spoilt world that but for it
Would have been wholly exquisite.
O priceless and forbidden joy,
That is the loved and loathed alloy
In every cup of earth ; can those
Enchanted fruits of dream compose

A subtler flavour even in dreams ?
Grapes of an ecstasy which seems
The ecstasy that souls may have
In some wild heaven beyond the grave,
Is yours a subtler wine than this
Of earth's poor vineyard, wine that is
So sweet to taste, so good to give
The intoxicating lust to live,
And, its so brief desire being had,
Leaves the delighted flesh so sad ?

ANGER

My robes are red with blood ; my name
Is Anger. The delicious flame
Which burns within me shall not die
Till the last lover has put by
The last kiss ; for it is the fire
Of love, which with extreme desire
Burns out the heart that love has lit
With the extreme desire of it.
I love so ardently, I know
Not love from hate, not joy from woe.
I, when I love, am wroth awhile
With love's delight, if that can smile,
With love's desire, that can abate,
With this most pure and passionate
Moment of moments, if that last
Less than to measure all the past
And all the future. I am sad
Only for this, that I have had

No other hatred so intense
In justice and magnificence
As that self-hatred which I press
Against my own unworthiness.
Could I so dear a hatred prove,
That rapture would out-rapture love.
I walk on many a steep path,
Yet without weariness ; my wrath,
That strives against all mortal strife,
Is as a well-spring of new life.
I sharpen in the lover's heart
Desire, and when the pointed dart
Has flown, and quivers, turn afresh
The barb in the delighted flesh :
The flesh cries out and thanks me. I
In hearts am also jealousy,
Which is love's anger against love
For love's sake. It is I who move
The hearts of men that they refuse
Sought gifts, and women, that they choose
What they desire not. Love becomes
Without me, as a rich man's crumbs
Unto a poor man ; Love with me
Is the rich man's satiety
Of his spread feast. I am in these
Mother of madness, the disease
That proud men die of ; and in those
Mother of wisdom. There arose
Many, by me, that have gone far,
And, for a perilous pilgrim star,
Have left their hamlets in the vale,

And have found kingdoms. Mine the tale
Of those who, having overturned
Kingdoms, and unto ruins burned
Strong cities, have sat down thereon,
Forgetting to lay stone on stone
That they might build, and wall about,
Mightier cities. I cry out,
In glory, on the topmost towers
Of the world, exulting that the hours
Of the world are numbered; and my voice
Is louder than the confluent noise
Of the four winds that hurry forth
From South and East and West and North.
Come hither, all that are the slaves
Of any bondage: of the graves
Wherein the dead bury their dead,
Or of youth's bubbling fountain-head;
Come hither, bondslaves of content,
You, bondslaves of that indolent
Languor of love too satisfied;
Drink of the spirit of my pride,
And I will free you of your chains,
Yea, I will light within your veins
An inextinguishable fire
Which shall consume even that desire
Of bondage. Who shall set me free,
Lastly, of mine own slavery?

PRIDE

I wear the purple: I am Pride.
By me Love sits at God's right side,

Equal with God ; by me Love comes
Unto the many martyrdoms
Of fierce and unforgiven desire.
My spirit in Satan was that fire
Which lit the flaming brand he hurled
Into the darkness of the world,
Where men groped dimly after God ;
By me the beggar in the road,
Loving and being loved again,
Laughs in his rags against the rain,
Crying : Is it a little thing
To be the equal of a king ;
Can I have more than all I want ?
I teach the little reed to vaunt
Its rippling, twilit, secret voice,
The wind's breath and the water's noise,
Against the oak's great voice that forms
The eternal battle-cry of storms.
I teach the oak, being great and old,
To scorn, and as a moth's flight hold,
The wandering kingdoms of the clouds.
I hide from kings' eyes their own shrouds,
Whispering : Though the beggar die,
Kings have their immortality !
I teach the dreamer to despise
Thrones for their brief mortalities.
I am that voice which is the faint,
First, far-off sin within the saint,
When of his humbleness he first
Takes thought ; and I become that thirst
Which makes him drunken with his own

Humbleness, and so casts him down
From the last painful stair that waits
His triumphing feet at heaven's gates.
I am the only tempter heard
By Chastity ; I speak the word
Which in her confident heart she hears,
A whisper in her guarded ears :
For others let temptation be
Temptation, not for Chastity !
By me all lovers make their boast,
Contemning the eternal host
Of glories that have filled the earth
Since the first conqueror had birth,
And that eternity of peace
Which the assembled heavens release
To angels that have conquered it.
Beside the one brief infinite
Moment of earth and heaven's eclipse
When in that silence they join lips,
Closing their eyes. I too have sought,
In other's eyes, some grace unthought,
Only to see, as in a glass,
Mine own unchanging image pass ;
I have seen no one yet more fair,
Greater or subtler anywhere,
Than I am. When I love, being Pride,
I raise my lover to my side,
And I have never loved in vain.
Who loves me never loves again,
Nor have I, being Pride, forgot
A lover. Praise delights me not,

Nor mine own mirror: I am I.
To know me is to satisfy
Knowledge; to love me is to know
Wisdom. Far off, dreams come and go;
But I, that seek upon the earth
Nothing that had not mortal birth,
That bow not, on the ways of sin,
To aught I have not found within,
Dream never: we must kneel to dreams.
These are, if that be true which seems
To have been written on their wings,
The messengers of foreign kings.

LYING

I speak all tongues; also I speak
The learning all the ages seek,
Some capture, and all leave behind;
But I have cast out of my mind
Wisdom, and out of my heart love.
I lust not, nor sloth-heavy move,
Not covetous, no wine-bibber,
Nor is my tongue hasty to stir,
Nor mine eyes proud; but I am wise
As the snake's tongue, the woman's eyes.
All men believe me; me alone
All men believe; to each his own
Desire I speak, in his own way.
To him who loves but love, I say:
I love you; to the vain: In truth,
I find you beautiful, O youth;
And to the timid: You are strong.

Behold these jewels, how the long
Slow silken raiment folds and drifts :
These gems, this raiment, are the gifts
Of all my lovers and my friends.
When at God's feet the sinner bends,
Saying, I repent ; I am his thought,
His speech, although he knows it not.
And when at the beloved's feet
The lover sighs : I love you, sweet,
I never loved, not ever may,
Love any one but you ; I say,
Word before word, each word for both.
When Lust says : I am life ; when Sloth :
I am content ; when Avarice :
I seek where any beauty is ;
When Gluttony : My mortal thirst
Upon immortal fruit was nursed ;
When Anger : I refine like fire ;
When Pride : No Praise do I desire ;
'Tis I who speak in each, 'tis I
Through whom these lordly voices lie,
Since (lest men know me and condemn)
I speak my will to him through them.
Who is there that shall say for me
That all things are but vanity ?

The Body

I am the bondslave of these slaves.

The Sins

O tyrant of the many graves,

It is to you that we are bound !
For you, for you, all we have found
New service, bondage ever new ;
We have brought all our gifts to you,
We have made pleasure of our pains,
And you have made these many chains
Upon our hands, our feet, our souls.
But for this bondage that controls
Our will with that omnipotence
Which not our spirits, though intense
In their own ardour, can revoke,
We had been free ; and as sweet smoke
Had not our liberal glories gone
Up to the borders of God's throne,
Pure as the savour of his breath,
But for you, Body of our death ?

The Soul

Why do you crucify me afresh ?

The Sins

O tyrant, sorer than the flesh,
Whose tyranny outlives the morn
Of resurrection, we have borne
From you a heavier slavery,
From you, by whom we might be free !
You gave us spiritual eyes
That we might sin, and be more wise
In sinning ; thought, that we might find

A subtler craft within the mind ;
Wings, that we might be strong to bear
Our burdens through the accomplice air,
Not tiring of them ; sense of good,
That virtue, being understood,
Might be our yoke-fellow ; the sight
Of beauty, that at last we might,
For you, O Soul, bring both within
Your domination, to be sin !

THE BODY

Dancers, I tire of you. I tire
Of all desire save one desire :
That I were free of you. My brows
Are weary of this golden house,
My brain is weary of your feet,
That loiter where they once were fleet,
Yet cease not. Cease ! for I behold
No beauty, as I did of old,
In any of your posturing :
You are as some forgotten thing.
And yet I saw you long ago
As those brave joys that come and go
In youth's rebellion of delight
Against old custom ; in my sight
You were the spirits made perfect of
Virtues that sinned from love of love ;
Immortal was each countenance,
Your dance was as the starry dance
Of the seven planets. Now I see

A wheel turned on an axle-tree,
A beggar's cloak that the wind shook ;
Your painted faces are a book
Scrawled by the fingers of a child ;
How is it I was so beguiled,
What was it that I loved you for,
O false ones, whom I now abhor
Even as I did adore you once ?
I would I could put back the sun's
Dark hand upon the dial ! Alas,
It is too late, and I must pass
The interval, until all ends,
With you, whom I have chosen for friends,
Chosen for my friends I know not how.
Would that the dance were over now !

The Soul

Dancers, I tire of you. I tire
Of all desire save one desire :
That I were free of you. Mine eyes
Are heavy with the mockeries
Of your eternal vanity ;
Your motions know not melody,
As your souls know not. You advance
As waves do, and your tangled dance
Scatters as leaves blown down the wind.
I find no grace in you, I find
Vanity, your illusions vain ;
And though I have thus long been fain
To endure you for the Body's sake,

And seeking from myself to make
Some moment's folly of escape,
Yet have I seen each soft-veiled shape
In its ungirded nakedness,
Each painted face a white distress
Under the smile; astray, the beat
Of hurrying and unanswering feet,
And that you know not why you go
Your wandering ways: but who shall know
Save one that silent in the wings
Stands, and beholds your wanderings,
Who set the measure that you mar?
Have I not seen you as you are
Always, and have I once admired
Your beauty? I am very tired,
Dancers, I am more tired than you.
When shall the dance be all danced through?
I see the lights grow dimmer; one
By one the lights go out; the sun
Will meet the darkness on its way.
Is it near morning?

THE STAGE-MANAGER

It is day.

THE SOUL

Would it were that last day of days!

THE STAGE-MANAGER

It is. Each morning that decays
To midnight ends the world as well,
For the world's day, as that farewell
When, at the ultimate judgment-stroke,
Heaven too shall vanish in pale smoke.

PARIS, *December* 16, 1896.
ROME, *December* 27, 29, 1896.
January 4, 19, 21, 1897.
February 3, 4, 1897.

THE LOVER OF THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

To Sarojini Naidu

A Youth of Sheba. The Queen of Sheba.
The Herald. King Solomon.

The Youth

I live before the Moon of Queens,
I live and die before her sweet,
White, secret, wise, indifferent feet;
And love, that is my life-blood, means
No more to her than summer heat
Or sudden sweetness of the flowers.
O colder than the icy moon,
That hides and dreams all day, to swoon
At night among the starry hours
When the pale night is at its noon!
She, the one whiteness of the earth,
For whom the ardent valley grows
A flame, an odour, and the rose,
Finds in the world but wisdom worth
The trouble of the soul's repose.
Kings from the West, Kings from the East,
Have poured out gold, incense, and myrrh
In tribute at the feet of her,
To whom the word of sage or priest
Is more than these and lovelier
Than battles reddening the plain,
Or cities washed with smoking waves,
Or far-off continents of slaves

Bound captive to her anklet chain,
Or conquest of uncounted graves.
Kings from the East, Kings from the West,
Have come and gone, and no man yet
Has found the frozen amulet
That seals her heart within her breast.

THE HERALD

Room for the Queen of Sheba, let
The hearts and knees of all men bow!

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

O gazer of the stars, draw near,
I have a tiding for thine ear,
Now all things are accomplished, now
The master of the world is here:
Mine eyes have looked on Solomon.

THE YOUTH

May the Queen prosper in all things!

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

The wisdom of the King of Kings
Is as his God's pavilion,
Pure gold, and veiled by seraph's wings.
Else were it brighter than white light:
As in a tender sea I bathe
In brightness, and its waves enswathe
My inmost spirit with delight.

THE YOUTH

Be all things even as the Queen saith!

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

I have unburdened all my soul,
And he has filled my soul with his :
There is none wiser than he is,
His soul has opened to the whole
World's wisdom, as to happiness,
And wisdom blossoms like a flower
That need but blossom to be fair ;
And as the crown upon his hair
His pure magnificence of power
Garlands his going everywhere.

THE YOUTH

The Queen is wiser than all men ;
Why should the Queen of Queens bow down
To any wisdom, when the crown
Of wisdom is her own, and when
The soul of wisdom is her own ?

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

I am a child before this man,
I have but played with toys, and fought
With shadows, and my little thought
Shrivels before him to a span,
And all I am is less than nought.

THE YOUTH

Madam, the Kings of all the earth
Have been accounted in your eyes
Even as a little dust of spice,

A little fragrant moment's worth ;
Yet these, although they were not wise,
Madam, these loved you with a love
That was a shield and buckler flung
About your life, a banner hung
Upon the topmost towers thereof ;
And these were mighty, and these young,
And all had died for you, and all
Had lived for you, and all had been,
Being Kings, the servants of the Queen.
Shall Solomon attend your call,
Shall he, a slave with slaves, be seen ?

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

O youth that speakest these brave words,
Hast thou loved any ?

THE YOUTH

Madam, yea.

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

And did thy will choose out thy way,
And didst thou love for flocks and herds,
And didst thou love who loved thee, say ?

THE YOUTH

Madam, I loved but for love's sake.

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

Happily ?

THE YOUTH
Happily ; in vain.

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA
Wouldst thou be free of love again ?

THE YOUTH
O Queen, how gladly would I take
Into my heart a tenfold pain !

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA
Thou lovest well. I would love well.

THE HERALD
Room for the King of Israel, bow
Your hearts and knees before him now,
Room for the King of Israel !

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA
King of the Kings of earth, hail thou.

KING SOLOMON
O Queen, in Sheba hast thou found
Among the groves of spice and myrrh
The honeyed wisdom lovelier
Upon thy moving lips than sound
Of psaltery or dulcimer ?

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA
O King, I have given up my youth
To wisdom, I have sought to find

The secret influences that bind
Star unto star, the grains of truth
Shredded in sand beneath the wind,
The secret dropping in the rain,
The secret hushed among the reeds
And huddled in the heart of weeds ;
And I have called across the plain
Wise men whose words are more than deeds,
And I have listened to their speech,
And talked with those Arabians
Whose memory is more than man's,
And read with them the books that teach
The lore of the Egyptians.
And I have given up for this
The joy of love, and all the spring,
And all the garden blossoming
With scents of simple happiness,
And every sweet unthoughtful thing.
I have given up the joys of life
That I might find its secret ; lo,
I have attained not even to know
Why, when thou comest near, the strife
That comes and goes and will not go
Out of my heart is strangely stilled.
O King, my wisdom unto thine
Is as a shadow, and no more mine ;
Thou in whom wisdom is fulfilled,
Canst thou the word of life divine ?

King Solomon

O Queen, I also have inquired,

And sought out wisdom patiently,
And if in all the world there be
More wisdom yet to be desired,
Wisdom is weariness to me.
For wisdom, being attained, but shows
That all things are but shadows cast
On running water, swiftly past,
And as the shadow of the rose
That withers in the mirror glassed.
What shall it profit me to have been
Yesterday happy, if to-day
I am sad, and where is yesterday?
What shall it profit me, O Queen,
When I am dead, and laid away
Under the earth, to have been wise,
To have lived long and ruled with might,
When all the ancient weight of night
Is as a burden on mine eyes,
And all the word is full of light?
There is one secret unto all:
Though life be fair or life forlorn,
Though men bow down to thee or scorn,
Howe'er fate fill the interval,
'Tis better not to have been born.

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

O King, how then may we that live
Best use the interval that waits
Between the closed and open gates?
How may we best, O King, forgive
For this sad gift the unfriendly fates?

KING SOLOMON

Queen, we may love.

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

Yet is not love,
As life, illusion ?

KING SOLOMON

Even so deep,
That this enchants into its sleep
Even them that know the secret of
The enchanted slumber that they keep.
Love only of illusions brings
The present to the present hour ;
Wisdom and wealth and state and power
Promise the future, whose slow wings,
When we have reached it, do but shower
A little travelling dust on us
While groping in the dust we bow ;
Love only is the eternal now,
Being of our frailty piteous.
When thou art I, and I am thou,
Time is no more ; the heavy world,
As we among the lilies, we
Under the vine and almond tree,
Wake to that slumber, might be hurled
Into the void eternity,
And we not know. Beloved, come
Into the garden dim with spice ;
Let us forget that we are wise,

And wisdom, though it be the sum
Of all but love, is love's disguise.
Let us forget all else that is,
Save this, that joy is ours to know,
A moment, ere he turn and go,
And that joy's moment, love, is this.

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

Beloved, be it even so.

THE YOUTH

He who has found all wisdom out
Is yet too wise to find out love;
His wisdom and the pride thereof
Is as a cloud folded about
The brightness of the sun above.
He does not know that love is breath
A man but breathes because he must;
A breath, a bondage, and a trust,
That knows not time, that knows not death,
That knows not love which is but lust,
Nor love which is but vain desire.
He, who is wisdom, does not see
It is from all eternity.
Man loves that love which shall not tire
When heaven and earth have ceased to be.
She, for his moment, loves not him,
But wisdom; let him love, not her,
But love; I, waiting lonelier
Than even of old, watch out the dim

And shadowy days, that without stir
Into the dusk of years descend ;
I wait, till heaven and earth being gone,
She comes to me to be my own
Until this love come to an end.
Bow down to me, O Solomon !

May 28, 1898.

THE DANCE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF HERODIAS

Is it the petals falling from the rose ?
For in the silence I can hear a sound
Nearer than mine own heart-beat, such a word
As roses murmur, blown by a great wind.
I see a pale and windy multitude
Beaten about the air, as if the smoke
Of incense kindled into visible life
Shadowy and invisible presences ;
And, in the cloudy darkness, I can see
The thin white feet of many women dancing,
And in their hands . . . I see it is the dance
Of the daughters of Herodias ; each of them
Carries a beautiful platter in her hand,
Smiling, because she holds against her heart
The secret lips and the unresting brow
Some John the Baptist's head makes lamentable ;
Smiling as innocently as if she carried
A wet red quartered melon on a dish.
For they are stupid, and they do not know
That they are slaying the messenger of God.
Here is Salome. She is a young tree
Swaying in the wind ; her arms are slender branches,
And the heavy summer leafage of her hair
Stirs as if rustling in a silent wind ;
Her narrow feet are rooted in the ground,
But, when the dim wind passes over her,
Rustlingly she awakens, as if life
Thrilled in her body to its finger-tips.
Her little breasts arise as if a thought

Beckoned, her body quivers ; and she leans
Forward, as if she followed, her wide eyes
Swim open, her lips seek ; and now she leans
Backward, and her half-parted lips are moist,
And her eyelashes mingle. The gold coins
Tinkle like little bells about her waist,
Her golden anklets clash once, and are mute
The eyes of the blue-lidded turquoises,
The astonished rubies, waked from dreams of fire,
The emeralds coloured like the under-sea,
Pale chrysoprase and flaming chrysolite,
The topaz twofold, twofold sardonyx,
Open, from sleeping long between her breasts ;
And those two carbuncles, which are the eyes
Of the gold serpent nestling in her hair,
Shoot starry fire ; the bracelets of wrought gold
Mingle with bracelets of carved ivory
Upon her drooping wrists. Herodias smiles,
But the grey face of Herod withers up,
As if it drooped to ashes ; the parched tongue
Labours to moisten his still-thirsting lips ;
The rings upon his wrinkled fingers strike,
Ring against ring, between his knees. And she,
Salome, has forgotten everything,
But that the wind of dancing in her blood
Exults, crying a strange, awakening song ;
And Herod has forgotten everything,
He has forgotten he is old and wise.
He does not hear the doubled-handed sword
Scrape on the pavement, as Herodias beckons
The headsman, from behind him, to come forth.

They dance, the daughters of Herodias,
With their eternal, white, unfaltering feet,
And always, when they dance, for their delight,
Always a man's head falls because of them.
Yet they desire not death, they would not slay
Body or soul, no, not to do them pleasure :
They desire love, and the desire of men ;
And they are the eternal enemy.
They know that they are weak and beautiful,
And that their weakness makes them beautiful,
For pity, and because man's heart is weak.
To pity woman is an evil thing ;
She will avenge upon you all your tears,
She would not that a man should pity her.
But to be loved by one of these beloved
Is poison sweeter than the cup of sleep
At midnight : death, or sorrow worse than death,
Or that forgetfulness, drowning the soul,
Shall heal you of it, but no other thing :
For they are the eternal enemy.
They do not understand that in the world
There grows between the sunlight and the grass
Anything save themselves desirable.
It seems to them that the swift eyes of men
Are made but to be mirrors, not to see
Far-off, disastrous, unattainable things.
" For are not we," they say, " the end of all ?
Why should you look beyond us ? If you look
Into the night, you will find nothing there :
We also have gazed often at the stars.
We, we alone among all beautiful things,

We only are real: for the rest are dreams.
Why will you follow after wandering dreams
When we await you? And you can but dream
Of us, and in our image fashion them!"
They do not know that they but speak in sleep
Speaking vain words as sleepers do; that dreams
Are fairer and more real than they are;
That all this tossing of our freighted lives
Is but the restless shadow of a dream;
That the whole world, and we that walk in it,
Sun, moon, and stars, and the unageing sea,
And all the happy humble life of plants,
And the unthoughtful eager life of beasts,
And all our loves, and birth, and death, are all
Shadows, and a rejoicing spectacle
Dreamed out of utter darkness and the void
By that first, last, eternal soul of things,
The shadow of whose brightness fashions us,
That, for the day of our eternity,
It may behold itself as in a mirror.
Shapes on a mirror, perishable shapes,
Fleeting, and without substance, or abode
In a fixed place, or knowledge of ourselves,
Poor, fleeting, fretful, little arrogant shapes;
Let us dream on, forgetting that we dream!

They dance, the daughters of Herodias,
Everywhere in the world, and I behold
Their rosy-petalled feet upon the air
Falling and falling in a cadence soft
As thoughts of beauty sleeping. Where they pass,

The wisdom which is wiser than things known,
The beauty which is fairer than things seen,
Dreams which are nearer to eternity
Than that most mortal tumult of the blood
Which wars on itself in loving, droop and die.
But they smile innocently, and dance on,
Having no thought but this unslumbering thought :
" Am I not beautiful ? Shall I not be loved ? "
Be patient, for they will not understand,
Not till the end of time will they put by
The weaving of slow steps about men's hearts.
They shall be beautiful, they shall be loved.
And though a man's head falls because of them
Whenever they have danced his soul asleep,
It is not well that they should suffer wrong ;
For beauty is still beauty, though it slay,
And love is love, although it love to death.
Pale, windy, and ecstatic multitude
Beaten about this mortal air with winds
Of an all but immortal passion, borne
Upon the flight of thoughts that drooped their wings
Into the cloud and twilight for your sake,
Yours is the beauty of your own desire,
And it shall wither only with that love
Which gave it being. Dance in the desolate air,
Dance always, daughters of Herodias,
With your eternal, white, unfaltering feet,
But dance, I pray you, so that I from far
May hear your dancing fainter than the drift
Of the last petals falling from the rose.

July 14, 1897.

THE CHIMAERA

I DREAMED that the Chimaera came,
A wandering angel, white with flame
From some cloud's height or moonless deep,
And bent above me in the sleep
We dream in cradles, mused, and smiled
Subtly, and said to me: "O child,
Born under Venus, to be love's,
Under the Moon, that whitely moves,
Chaste and inconstant, over heaven;
Child, who to Herschel has been given,
The star of strange desire, all these
Are busy with your destinies.
You shall desire immortal things,
And, in too swift imaginings,
Tire out desire, who has but wings.
You shall desire love, you shall track
The young God home; then, shrinking back,
Like Psyche from his naked face,
Desert him at the meeting-place.
You shall desire fame, yet despise
The bent knees, the insolent cries
And loud hands of the multitude.
You shall desire joy's daily food
And hope's unalterable home,
Yet refuse peace. And there shall come
Every desire you have implored,
And shall kneel down, saying Lord, Lord,
And wait your pleasure. But you, tired

Of all desires you have desired,
Shall say, I know you not, and thrust
Scornfully back into the dust
These servitors importunate.
Then, from the silence where I wait,
A blind old madness shall return,
And shall lay hold on you and burn
Your veins with bitter life ; for this
Kings have lost kingdoms in a kiss,
And wise men kingdoms of the mind,
And have gone forth, naked and blind,
With dancing and with insane mirth,
Into the waste ways of the earth.
You shall seek out the Cloven Hill,
Where the wide gates are open still,
The tables set, nor have they ceased,
The feasters feasting at the feast.
Then shall that dusk of shadowy air
(Because for you one light is there)
Blossom in white-rose flame for you,
And the old sun and air and dew
And freshness of the world, and change
Of seasons and cold stars, grow strange ;
Then, suddenly, you shall be hurled,
Forth from thence, back into the world.
Then shall your veins, remembering
That sweet, intolerable thing
Which shook their pulses with its breath,
Desire the shadow of that death ;
And it shall not be given you back.
Then shall you seek the hidden track

A mist has covered from your eyes
Since like a veil about you lies
The bright imprisonment of day.
Child, child, you shall not find the way."

Chimaera, I have been among
The loving people, who yet throng
The twilight about Tannhäuser ;
And I have seen the face of her
Whose sorrow, older than that grace
Which in her face is Beauty's face,
Fights in her battled soul for God.
And the earth, knowing I have trod
Ways not its ways, those ways not meet,
Sets all its stones against my feet.
Let me return, Chimaera ! Still
I seek for the accursed hill,
The most fair gate of Hell. Some day,
Chimaera, I shall find the way !

Ah, if I might but find it not !
Are there not other ways forgot
Which lead to other lands than this
Of the immeasurable abyss ?
I would that I could one day close
Mine eyes in some divine repose ;
That I could shape to my control
A palace for my restless soul.
With dreams of order I would build,
My comely palace should be filled
With dreams of colour and bright sound,

And twilight should enfold it round,
Setting a veil against the sun.
Then, like mute servants, one by one,
Dreams should bring in to me, and lay
Before my feet, and bear away,
Beautiful things of earth, but changed,
Made pallid, delicate, estranged
From the gold light, the glittering air.
There should my soul find refuge, there
Life and my dream of life be one.
Too late! The music has begun
Which calls me in the air; there floats
A sound of voices, the wild notes
(Is it in air, is it from earth?)
Which were the wine-song of our mirth.
They call me if a moment's peace
Rock memory to sleep; then cease.

Chimaera, I will strive no more.
All things, as they have been before,
Shall be, until the end of days,
Nor shall our crying change the ways
Our feet must walk in. I will strive
No more, content to be alive,
Hoping no hopes, accepting all,
Quiet behind the prison-wall
Which with thine own self shuts me in.
Why strive in vain? why not begin
To make my prison fair to see,
And half forget my slavery?
Shall not the universal stars

Visit me through my prison-bars ?
But it is you, Chimaera, you,
Whose low continual whisper through
Those prison-bars the whole day long
Comes to me, murmuring : " Up, be ſtrong,
Caſt off your chains, come forth, behold
A way of roses and of gold ;
Winter is over, and the spring
In the world's heart is blossoming ;
It is the time of lilies. Come ! "
O impotent voice abhorred, be dumb !
Why is it that I cannot find
Bounds to my ardours unconfined,
Why, empty of sin and void of grace,
Do I behold only my face
In the white mirror of the world,
Vainly, and without respite, hurled
Like the torn winds about the void ;
Why thirſting ſtill for unenjoyed
Delights and undiscovered springs,
Desiring in all mortal things
To hear and hold and taſte and see
Mortal impossibility ?
All men, not wholly drowned in life,
Suffer the rapture and the ſtrife
Of their Chimaera : some men chain
That airy monſter of the brain,
And he is Ariel to them ; some
Endure his bondage. Yet there come,
To all these, phantoms of release,
Even these possess the secret peace

Which is both memory and hope.
But I have rendered all things up ;
White angel, wandering from afar,
I know you now, the thing you are,
I know I am myself mine own
Chimaera, chained, famished, alone,
Whose anger heartens him afresh
To feed upon his very flesh,
Till anguish bid delight to pause ;
And I must suffer him because
Until the hour when God shall send
Suddenly the reluctant end
He with my breath must draw his breath.
O bondslave, bondslave unto death,
Might I but hope that death should free
This self from its eternity !

Bologna, Venice, *May* 8-15, 1897.
London, *January* 10, 1898.

THE OLD WOMEN

They pass upon their old, tremulous feet,
Creeping with little satchels down the street,
And they remember, many years ago,
Passing that way in silks. They wander, slow
And solitary, through the city ways,
And they alone remember those old days
Men have forgotten. In their shaking heads
A dancer of old carnivals yet treads
The measure of past waltzes, and they see
The candles lit again, the patchouli
Sweeten the air, and the warm cloud of musk
Enchant the passing of the passionate dusk.
Then you will see a light begin to creep
Under the earthen eyelids, dimmed with sleep,
And a new tremor, happy and uncouth,
Jerking about the corners of the mouth.
Then the old head drops down again, and shakes,
Muttering.
Sometimes, when the swift gaslight wakes
The dreams and fever of the sleepless town,
A shaking huddled thing in a black gown
Will steal at midnight, carrying with her
Violet little bags of lavender,
Into the tap-room full of noisy light;
Or, at the crowded earlier hour of night,
Sidle, with matches, up to some who stand
About a stage-door, and, with furtive hand,
Appealing: "I too was a dancer, when

Your fathers would have been young gentlemen ! ”
And sometimes, out of some lean ancient throat,
A broken voice, with here and there a note
Of unspoilt crystal, suddenly will arise
Into the night, while a cracked fiddle cries
Pantingly after ; and you know she sings
The passing of light, famous, passing things.
And sometimes, in the hours past midnight, reels
Out of an alley upon staggering heels,
Or into the dark keeping of the stones
About a doorway, a vague thing of bones
And draggled hair.
And all these have been loved,
And not one ruinous body has not moved
The heart of man's desire, nor has not seemed
Immortal in the eyes of one who dreamed
The dream that men call love. This is the end
Of much fair flesh ; it is for this you tend
Your delicate bodies many careful years,
To be this thing of laughter and of tears,
To be this living judgment of the dead,
An old grey woman with a shaking head.

Burnham Beeches, *July* 15, 1906.

THE UNLOVED

These are the women whom no man has loved.
Year after year, day after day has moved
These hearts with many longings, and with tears,
And with content ; they have received the years
With empty hands, expecting no good thing ;
Life has passed by their doors, not entering.
In solitude, and without vain desire,
They have warmed themselves beside a lonely fire ;
And, without scorn, beheld as in a glass
The blown and painted leaves of Beauty pass.
Their souls have been made fragrant with the spice
Of costly virtues lit for sacrifice ;
They have accepted Life, the unpaid debt,
And looked for no vain day of reckoning.
Yet
They too in certain windless summer hours
Have felt the stir of dreams, and dreamed the powers
And the exemptions and the miracles
And the cruelty of Beauty. Citadels
Of many-walled and deeply-moated hearts
Have suddenly surrendered to the arts
Of so compelling magic ; entering,
They have esteemed it but a little thing
To have won so great a conquest ; and with haste
They have cast down, and utterly laid waste,
Tower upon tower, and sapped their roots with flame ;
And passed on that eternity of shame
Which is the way of Beauty on the earth.

And they have shaken laughter from its mirth,
To be a sound of trumpets and of horns
Crying the battle-cry of those red morns
Against a sky of triumph.
On some nights
Of delicate Springtide, when the hesitant lights
Begin to fade, and glimmer, and grow warm,
And all the softening air is quick with storm,
And the ardours of the young year, entering in,
Flush the grey earth with buds ; when trees begin
To feel a trouble mounting from their roots,
And all their green life blossoming into shoots,
They too, in some obscure, unblossoming strife,
Have felt the stirring of the sap of life.
And they have wept, with bowed heads ; in the street
They hear the twittering of little feet,
The rocking of the cradles in their hearts.

This is a mood, and, as a mood, departs
With the dried tears ; and they resume the tale
Of the dropt stitches ; these must never fail
For a dream's sake ; nor, for a memory,
The telling of a patient rosary.

Tillyra Castle, *August* 19, 1896.

THE BEGGARS

It is the beggars who possess the earth.
Kings on their throne have but the narrow girth
Of some poor known dominion ; these possess
All the unknown, and that vast happiness
Of the uncertainty of human things.
Wandering on eternal wanderings,
They know the world ; and tasting but the bread
Of charity, know man ; and, strangely led
By some vague, certain, and appointed hand,
Know fate ; and being lonely, understand
Some little of the thing without a name
That sits by the roadside and talks with them,
When they are silent ; for the soul is shy
If more than its own shadow loiter by.
They and the birds are old acquaintances,
Knowing the dawn together ; theirs it is
To settle on the dusty land like crows,
The ragged vagabonds of the air ; who knows
How they too shall be fed, day after day,
And surer than the birds, for are not they
The prodigal sons of God, our piteous
Aliens, outcast and accusing us ?
Do they not ask of us their own, and wait,
Humbly, among the gods about the gate,
While we are feasting ? They will wait till night :
Who shall wait longer ?
Dim, shadowy, white,
The highway calls ; they follow till it ends,

And all the way they walk among their friends,
Sun, wind, and rain, their tearful sister rain,
Their brother wind. Forest and hill and plain
Know them and are forgotten. Grey and old,
Their feet begin to linger, brown arms fold
The heavy piece of earth about their heart,
And soon, and without trouble, they depart
On the last journey.
As the beggar lies,
With naked face, remembering the skies,
I think he only wonders: Shall I find
A good road still, a hayrick to my mind,
A tavern now and then upon the road?
He has been earth's guest; he goes; the old abode
Drops to the old horizon, and the day
Is over, and the dark is on the way.

May 6, 7, 1898.

DIVISIONS ON A GROUND

I

Beloved, there is a sorrow in the world
Too aged to remember its own birth,
A grey, old, weary, and immortal sorrow.
The sorrow of our love is as a breath
Sighed heavily by a sleeper in a dream ;
But this great sorrow of the world endures,
Sleepless, the alternation of the stars,
Beholding death, and crying upon death,
Sad with old age, and weary of the sun,
And deathless ; and shall not be wearier
When time has rusted your bright hair's fine gold.
Think what a little sorrow have we had
Who have seen beauty with the eyes of love,
Who have seen knowledge, wisdom, evil and good,
With the eyes of beauty, having felt the flame
Cleanse, sacrifice, illuminate us with joy !
Think on all lovers who have never met,
Wandering in the exile of the world,
Remembering they know not what, some voice,
Unheard and yet remembered, some dear face
Which shines beyond a cloud and waits for them.
Think then how little sorrow we have had !
All the uncomely evil of the earth
Has passed us by ; sorrow has been no clown
Forcing our gates with riotous mirth, but grave
As the unwilling herald of a king,

And we, have we not willed that this should be,
Somewhere, when naked soul by naked soul
The fashioner of the world arraigns his work,
Bidding each living thing behold, and choose,
Beholding, his own lot; have we not willed
That all this should be thus, willing our fate?
O blind, old, weary sorrow of the world,
Receive my pity, though from this day forth
I have said farewell to joy! I have within
A memory which is more than happiness;
I have seen the glory, and am henceforth blind
That I may feast on sight. Alas for those
On whom no unendurable glory shone,
Blind from the birth, who labour and behold
No shining on the sea or in the sky
When the long day is over, but endure
The weight of that old sorrow of the world
Which beauty cannot lift from tired men.

November 27, 1897.

II

The sorrowful, who have loved, I pity not;
But those, not having loved, who do rejoice
To have escaped the cruelty of love,
I pity, as I pity the unborn.
Love is, indeed, as life is, full of care,
The tyrant of the soul, the death of peace,
Rash father and blind parricide of joy;
And it were better never to have been,

If slothful ease, calm hours, are all of life,
Than to have chosen such a bedfellow.
Yet, if not rest, but rapture, and to attain
The wisdom that is silence in the stars
When the great morning-song is quieted,
Be more of life than these, and worth the pain
Of living, then choose love, although he bring
Mountainous griefs, griefs that have made men mad.
Be sorrowful, all ye that have not loved,
Bow down, be sorrowful exceedingly,
Cover your heads from the embracing air,
And from the eye of the sun lest ye be shamed ;
Earth would be naked of you ; ye have known
Only to hide from living ; life rejects
The burden of your uncompanioned days.
This is of all things saddest in the world,
Not that men love, not that men die for love,
But that they dare be cowards of their joy,
Even unto death ; who, dying without love,
Drop into narrow graves to shiver there
Among the winds of time, till time's last wind
Cleanse off the poor, lonely, and finite dust
From earth made ready for eternity.

November 21, 1897.

III

Let me hear music, for I am not sad,
But half in love with sadness. To dream so,
And dream, and so forget the dream, and so
Dream I am dreaming ! This old little voice,

Which pants and flutters in the clavichord,
Has the bird's wings in it, and women's tears,
The dust has drunken long ago, and sighs
As of a voiceless crying of old love
That died and never spoke; and then the soul
Of one who sought for wisdom; and these cry
Out of the disappointment of the grave,
And something, in the old and little voice,
Calls from so farther off than far away,
I tremble, hearing it, lest it draw me forth,
This flickering self, desiring to be gone
Into the boundless and abrupt abyss
Whereat begins infinity; and there
This flickering self wander eternally
Among the soulless, uncreated winds
Which storm against the barriers of the world.
But most I hear the pleading and sad voice
Of beauty, sad because it cannot speak
Out of harsh stones and out of evil noise,
And out of thwarted faces, and the gleam
Of things corrupted, and all ruinous things.
This is the voice that cries, and would be heard,
And can but speak in music. Venerable
And ageless Beauty of the world, whose breath
Is life in all things, I have seen thy form
In cloud, and grass, and wave, and glory of man,
Flawless, but I have heard thy very voice
Here only, here only human, and here sad
Only of all thy voices upon earth.

November 27, 1897.

IV

Who shall deliver us from too much love?
There is an evil thing within the world,
Mother of hatred, mother of cruelties,
The sunderer of hearts; and this is love.
I, if mine enemy hunger, give him food,
And, if mine enemy thirst, give him to drink;
This is a little and an easy thing.
But, if I heap the dish with only love,
In any charity, for love's sake alone
Fate shall not hold me guiltless of that deed.
For sorrow goes with it, and bitter joy,
And memory, and the desire of love,
And aching of remembering hearts remembered.
There is an evil thing within the heart:
Grief shall not master it nor any fear,
Nor any knowledge, nor desire of right;
Love in the heart shall shine within the eyes,
Giving itself in gift, withholding nothing;
And where the man gives shall the woman take,
And where the woman gives the man shall take,
Not counting gifts, giving and taking all,
Ruinously, a plague upon the earth.
O giver of this love, give man to see
The glory of thine intolerable gift,
Or snatch again out of his passionate hands,
Out of his passionate and childish hands,
That beautiful and sharp and fragile thing,
Love, that he makes so deadly and his toy!

January 2, 1898.

V

There is a woman whom I love and hate :
There is no other woman in the world :
Not in her life shall I have any peace.
There is a woman whom I love and hate :
I have not praised her : she is beautiful :
Others have praised her : she has seen my heart :
She looked, and laughed, and looked, and went away.

There is a woman whom I hate and love :
This is my sorrow : she has bound my neck
Within the noose of her long hairs, and bound
My soul within the halter of her dreams,
And fastened down my heart into one place,
Like a rat nailed upon a granary door ;
And she has gone a farther way than death.

There is a woman whom I love and hate :
Not in her life shall I have any peace :
Death, hear me not, when I desire her death !

December 12, 1897.

SOULS IN THE BALANCE

I. TO OUR LADY OF THE SEVEN SORROWS

LADY of the seven sorrows which are love,
What sacrificial way
First led your feet to those remoter heights
Which, for the uttermost delights
Of martyrs and Love's saints, are set above
The stations of the passion of our day?
Seven sorrows unto you has been desire
Since first your cheek grew pale,
And your astonished breath would fail,
And your eyes deepened into smouldering fire;
Seven sorrows from a child.
Nor has the soul which in you pants and rises
At any time been reconciled
With love and love's intolerable disguises.
In the child's morning-hour
You woke, and knew not the immortal power
Which in your ignorant veins was as the breeze
Troubling the waters of a little lake
And crying in the nests among the trees.
Fear bid you, trembling, wake,
And listen to the voice which seemed to shake
Bewildering prophecies
Unto the empty audience of the air.
The child, grown older, heard that voice again,
Nor heard that voice in vain.
You smiled, with a new meaning in your eyes,

As of some new, delightful care
Which made you suddenly more wise,
Older, and to yourself more fair.
Then silence came about your lips, and laid
That tremulous shadow there,
Whereby the sorrows mark you for their own.
You woke and were afraid to be alone,
And full of some strange joy to be afraid.

First love, the hour it came,
You seemed to have remembered ; and you knew
What a smoke-thwarted flame
Love's torch is, and the jewel of love's faith
How flawed, and by how many a name
The immortal comes to mortals, and how death
Is the first breath that love, made mortal, drew.
Therefore, not without tears,
And penitence, and a reluctant rapture,
All love's and not your lover's capture,
Not without sure, foreseeing fears
Of the unavoidable dedication of your years,
You entered on the way,
The way that was to be.

Mortal, and pitiful, yet immortally
Predestinate to that illustrious grief
Whose extreme anguish is its own relief,
Lady of the seven sorrows, who shall say
The ardours of that way ?
Men have looked up and seen you pass, and bowed
Into the dust to kiss your weary feet ;

And you have passed, and they have cursed aloud
With dusty mouths to find the dust not sweet.
You have passed by ; your eyes
Unalterably open in a dream,
Seeing alone the gleam
Of a far, mortal, azure paradise
Which your ecstatic fear is to attain.
Sometimes you linger, when men cry to you,
Linger as in a dream,
Linger in vain,
Having but shared, as they would have you do,
Some ecstasy of pain.

Therefore you shall be neither blessed nor cursed,
But pardoned, for you know not what you do ;
And of all punishments the worst
Of punishments for you is to be you.
Go, neither blessed nor cursed :
We, all we too who suffer of you, throng
To make a royal passage for your feet,
When, in a dream, ere long,
They shall go sorrowfully up the street.
You will pass by and not remember us,
We shall be strange as any last year's mirth ;
It is not thus, so lightly, O not thus
You carry the seven sorrows of the earth.

Naples, *April* 12–13, 1897.

II. STELLA MALIGNA.

My little slave!
Wouldst thou escape me? Only in the grave.

I will be poison to thee, honey-sweet,
And, my poison having tasted,
Thou shalt be delicately wasted,
Yet shalt thou live by that delicious death
Thou hast drunken from my breath,
Thou didst with my kisses eat.
I will be thy desire, and thou shalt flee me,
Thy enemy, and thou shalt seek:
My strength is to be weak,
And if through tears, not through thy tears, thou see me,
Beware, for of my kisses if thou tire,
Not of my tears,
Not of my tears shalt thou put off desire
Before the end of years.

What wouldst thou of me, little slave! my heart?
Nay, be content, here are mine arms around thee,
Be thou content that I have found thee,
And that I shall not suffer thee depart.
Ask nothing more of me.
Have I not given thee more than thou canst measure?
Take thou thy fill of pleasure.
Exult that thou art mine: think what it is
To be without my kiss;
Not to have known me is to know not love.

Think, to have known me not!
Heart may indeed from heart remove,
Body by body may not be forgot.
Thou hast been mine: ask nothing more of me:
My heart is not for thee.

Child, leave me then my heart;
I hold it in a folded peace apart,
I hold it for mine own.
There, in the quietness of dreams, it broods
Above untroubled moods,
No man hath been so near me as to have known.
The rest is thine: ah, take
The gift I have to give, my body, lent
For thy unsatisfied content,
For thy insatiable desire's compelling,
And let me for my pleasure make
For my own heart a lonely dwelling.
Thou wilt not? Thou wilt summon sorrow
From morrow unto endless morrow?
Thou wilt endure unto the uttermost?
Ah! little slave, my slave,
Thou shalt endure until desire be lost
In the achievement of the grave.
Thou shalt endure, and I, in dreams, behold,
Within my paradise of gold,
Thy heart's blood flowering for my peace;
And thy passion shall release
The secret light that in the lily glows,
The miracle of the secret rose.

DIEPPE, *August* 13, 1896.

III. THE PALE WOMAN

I SPOKE to the pale and heavy-lidded woman, and said :
O pale and heavy-lidded woman, why is your cheek
Pale as the dead, and what are your eyes afraid lest they
speak ?
And the woman answered me : I am pale as the dead,
For the dead have loved me, and I dream of the dead.

But I see in the eyes of the living, as a living fire,
The thing that my soul in triumph tells me I have forgot ;
And therefore mine eyelids are heavy, and I raise them not,
For always I see in the eyes of men the old desire,
And I fear lest they see that I desire their desire.

ROME, *February* 12, 1897.

IV. MATER LILIARUM

In the remembering hours of night,
When the fierce-hearted winds complain,
The trouble comes into my sight,
And the voices come again,
And the voices come again.

I see the tall white lilies bloom,
(Mother of lilies, pity me!)
The voice of lilies in the room
(Mother of lilies, pity me!)
Crying, crying silently.

The voice of lilies is your voice,
White lily of the world's desire;
And yours, and yours the lily's choice,
To consume whitely, as by fire,
Flawless, flaming, fire in fire.

O lily of the world's despair,
And born to be the world's delight,
Is it enough to have been fair,
To have been pure, to have been white,
As a lily in God's sight?

When the dark hours begin to wake,
And the unslackening winds go by,
There comes a trouble, for your sake:
O is it you, O is it I,
Crying the eternal cry?

I see the phantom lilies wave,
I hear the voices calling me ;
O you, that are too pure to save,
Immaculate eternally,
Mother of lilies, pity me !

June 2, 1896.

V. THE DOGS

My desires are upon me like dogs, I beat them back,
Yet they yelp upon my track ;
And I know that my soul one day shall lie at their feet,
And my soul be these dogs' meat.

My soul walks robed in white where the saints sing psalms,
Among the lilies and palms,
Beholding the face of God through the radiant bars
Of the mystical gate of stars ;
The robes of my soul are whiter than snow, she sings
Praise of immortal things ;
Yet still she listens, still in the night, she hears
The dogs' yelp in her ears.

O Most High ! I will pray, look down through the seven
Passionate veils of heaven,
Out of eternal peace, where the world's desire
Enfolds thee in veils of fire ;
Holy of Holies, the immaculate Lamb,
Behold me, the thing I am !
I, the redeemed of thy blood, the bought with a price,
The reward of thy sacrifice,
I, who walk with thy saints in a robe of white,
And who worship thee day and night,
Behold me, the thing I am, and do thou beat back
These feet that burn on my track !
I have prayed, God has heard ; I have prayed to Him, He
has heard ;

But He has not spoken a word ;
My soul walks robed in white among lilies and palms,
And she hears the triumphing psalms ;
But louder than all, by day and by night, she hears
The dog's yelp in her ears ;
And I know that my soul one day shall lie at their feet,
And my soul be these dogs' meat.

Tillyra Castle, *August* 25, 1896 .

VI. SPONSA DEI

Jesus Christ, I have longed with my whole heart for Thee,
O come to me and be the bridegroom of Thy bride ;
In Thy eternal presence give me to abide
Till mortal years have put on immortality.
O I have longed with an intolerable desire
For the indwelling ecstasy of the great breath,
For that immortal death which shall annihilate death
And burn up hell with Thy consuming kiss of fire.
All night because of Thee, Christ, I have lain awake,
Night after night I have lain awake in my white bed ;
The pillow is as seething fire beneath my head,
The sheets as swathing fire, all night, Christ, for Thy sake,
Night after night I have waited for Thee, all night long,
Mystical bridegroom of this flesh that pants to close
The aching arms of love's desire in love's repose
About Thy conscious presence felt : O Lord, how long ?
I have grown faint with over-much desire, and pale
With vigils over-much, my flesh forsakes my bones :
Suffering love of Christ, if that in Thee atones
For suffering sin in us, let not Thy mercies fail ;
For I have suffered, Lord, upon Thy very cross,
I bear upon my brow, my hands, my feet, my side,
The burning wounds Thou didst endure when crucified,
And for this gain I do account all things but loss.
Jesus Christ, I have waited for Thy coming : come !
Possess this waiting body no man hath possessed ;
Let me but feel Thy kiss of fire upon my breast
Lick up the dust of this consuming martyrdom !

February 14, 1896.

VII. ROSA FLAMMEA

Beautiful demon, O veil those eyes of fire,
Cover your breasts that are whiter than milk, and ruddy
With dewy buds of the magical rose, your body,
Veil your lips from the shining of my desire!
As a rose growing up from hell you waver before me,
Shaking an odorous breath that is fire within;
The Lord Christ may not pardon me this sweet sin,
But the scent of the rose that is rooted in hell steals o'er me.
O Lord Christ, I am lost, I am lost, I am lost!
Her eyes are as stars in a pool and their spell is on me;
She lifts her unsearchable lids, chill fire is upon me,
It shudders through every vein, and my brain is tossed
As the leaves of a tree when the wind coils under and over;
She smiles, and I hear the heart beat in my side;
She lifts her hands, and I swirl in a clutching tide;
But shall my soul not burn in flame if I love her?
She shall veil those eyes, those lips, ah! that breast.
Demon seeking my soul, I do adjure thee,
In the name of him for whose tempted sake I endure thee,
Trouble my sight no more: lost soul, be at rest!
She smiles, and the air grows into a mist of spices,
Frankincense, cinnamon, labdanum, and myrrh
Rise in sweet smoke about the feet of her
Before whom the sweets of the world are as sacrifices.
Cinnamon, frankincense, labdanum, and myrrh
Smoke in the air, the fume of them closes round me;
Help, ere the waves of the flood of odours have drowned me,
Help, ere it be too late! There has no help come,

And I feel that the rose of the pit begins to blossom
Into the likeness of a lost soul on fire,
And the soul that was mine is emptied of all but desire
Of the rose of her lips and the roses of her bosom.
Ah! she smiles the great smile, the immortal shame:
Her mouth to my mouth, though hell be the price hereafter!
I hear in the whirling winds her windy laughter,
And my soul for this shall whirl in the winds of flame.

Burnham Beeches, *July* 10, 1896.

VIII. LAUS VIRGINITATIS

The mirror of men's eyes delights me less,
O mirror, than the friend I find in thee ;
Thou lovest, as I love, my loveliness,
Thou givest my beauty back to me.

I to myself suffice ; why should I tire
The heart with roaming that would rest at home ?
Myself the limit to my own desire,
I have no desire to roam.

I hear the maidens crying in the hills :
" Come up among the bleak and perilous ways,
Come up and follow after Love, who fills
The hollows of our nights and days ;

" Love the deliverer, who is desolate,
And saves from desolation ; the divine
Out of great suffering ; Love, compassionate,
Who is thy bread and wine,

" O soul, that faints in following after him."
I hear ; but what is Love that I should tread
Hard ways among the perilous passes dim,
Who need no succouring wine and bread ?

Enough it is to dream, enough to abide
Here where the loud world's echoes fall remote,
Untroubled, unawakened, satisfied ;
As water-lilies float

Laus Virginitatis

Lonely upon a shadow-sheltered pool,
Dreaming of their own whiteness ; even so,
I dwell within a nest of shadows cool,
And watch the vague hours come and go.

They come and go, but I my own delight
Remain, and I desire no change in aught :
Might I escape indifferent Time's despite,
That ruins all he wrought !

This dainty body formed so curiously,
So delicately and wonderfully made,
Mine own, that none hath ever shared with me,
Mine own, and for myself arrayed ;

All this that I have loved and not another,
My one desire's delight, this, shall Time bring
Where Beauty hath the abhorred worm for brother,
The dust for covering ?

At least I bear it virgin to the grave,
Pure, and apart, and rare, and casketed ;
What, living, was mine own and no man's slave,
Shall be mine own when I am dead.

But thou, my friend, my mirror, dost possess
The shadow of myself that smiles in thee,
And thou dost give, with thine own loveliness,
My beauty back to me.

May 2, 1887.

IX. THE RAPTURE

I DRANK your flesh, and when the soul brimmed up
In that sufficing cup,
Then, slowly, steadfastly, I drank your soul;
Thus I possessed you whole;
And then I saw you, white, and vague, and warm,
And happy, as that storm
Enveloped you in its delirious peace,
And fearing but release,
Perfectly glad to be so lost and found,
And without wonder drowned
In little shuddering quick waves of bliss;
Then I, beholding this
More wonderingly than a little lake
That the white moon should make
Her nest among its waters, being free
Of the whole land and sea,
Remembered, in that utmost pause, that heaven
Is to each angel given
As wholly as to Michael or the Lord,
And of the saints' reward
There is no first or last, supreme delight
Being one and infinite.
Then I was quieted, and had no fear
That such a thing, so dear
And so incredible, being thus divine,
Should be, and should be mine,
And should not suddenly vanish away.
Now, as the lonely day

Forgets the night, and calls the world from dreams,
This, too, with daylight, seems
A thing that might be dreaming ; for my soul
Seems to possess you whole,
And every nerve remembers : can it be
This young delight is old as memory ?

June 2, 1899.

X. TO A GITANA DANCING: SEVILLE

Because you are fair as souls of the lost are fair,
And your eyelids laugh with desire, and your laughing feet
Are winged with desire, and your hands are wanton, and sweet
Is the promise of love in your lips, and the rose in your hair
Sweet, unfaded, a promise sweet to be sought,
And the maze you tread is as old as the world is old,
Therefore, you hold me, body and soul, in your hold,
And time, as you dance, is not, and the world is as nought.
You dance, and I know the desire of all flesh, and the pain
Of all longing of body for body; you reckon, repel,
Entreat, and entice, and bewilder, and build up the spell,
Link by link, with deliberate steps, of a flower-soft chain.
You laugh, and I know the despair, and you smile, and I know
The delight of your love, and the flower in your hair is a star.
It brightens, I follow; it fades, and I see it afar;
You pause: I awake; have I dreamt? was it longer ago
Than a dream that I saw you smile? for you turn, you turn,
As a startled beast in the toils: it is you that entreat,
Desperate, hating the coils that have fastened your feet,
The desire you desired that has come; and your lips now yearn,
And your hands now ache, and your feet faint for love.
Longing has taken hold even on you,
You, the witch of desire; and you pause, and anew
Your stillness moves, and you pause, and your hands move.

To a Gitana Dancing: Seville

Time, as you dance, is as nought, and the moments seem
Swift as eternity; time is at end, for you close
Eyes and lips and hands in sudden repose;
You smile: was it all no longer ago than a dream?

SEVILLE: *December* 4, 1898.

ON AN AIR OF RAMEAU

To Arnold Dolmetsch

A melancholy desire of ancient things
Floats like a faded perfume out of the wires ;
Pallid lovers, what unforgotten desires,
Whispered once, are retold in your whisperings ?

Roses, roses, and lilies with hearts of gold,
These you plucked for her, these she wore in her breast ;
Only Rameau's music remembers the rest,
The death of roses over a heart grown cold.

But these sighs ? Can ghosts then sigh from the tomb ?
Life then wept for you, sighed for you, chilled your breath ?
It is the melancholy of ancient death
The harpsichord dreams of, sighing in the room.
October 25, 1897.

AIRS FOR THE LUTE

To Madame Elodie Dolmetsch

I

When the sobbing lute complains,
Grieving for an ancient sorrow,
This poor sorrow that remains
Fain would borrow,
To give pleading unto sorrow,
Those uncapturable strains.

All, that hands upon the lute
Helped the voices to declare,
Voices mute
But for this, might I not share,
If, alas, I could but suit
Hand and voice unto the lute!

February 25, 1898.

II

If time so sweetly
On true according viols make
Her own completely
The lawless laws of turn and shake;

How should I doubt then
Love, being tuned unto your mood,
Should bring about then
True time and measure of your blood?

February 13, 1898.

III

Why are you so sorrowful in dreams ?
I am sad in the night ;
The hours till morning are white,
I hear the hours' flight
All night in dreams.

Why do you send me your dreams ?
For an old love's sake ;
I dream if I sleep or wake,
And shall but one heart ache,
For the sake of dreams ?

Pray that we sleep without dreams !
Ah, love, the only way
To put sorrow away,
Night or day, night or day,
From the way of dreams !

February 23, 1898.

IV

Strange, to remember tears !
Yet I know that I wept ;
And those hopes and those fears,
Strange, were as real as tears !

What's this delicate pain,
Twilight-coloured and grey ?
Odour-like through my brain
Steals a shadowy pain.

What's this joy in the air?
Musical as the leaves,
When the white winds are there,
Faint joy breathes in the air.

ROME, *January* 12, 1897.

MODERN BEAUTY

I AM the torch, she saith, and what to me
If the moth die of me? I am the flame
Of Beauty, and I burn that all may see
Beauty, and I have neither joy nor shame,
But live with that clear life of perfect fire
Which is to men the death of their desire.

I am Yseult and Helen, I have seen
Troy burn, and the most loving knight lie dead.
The world has been my mirror, time has been
My breath upon the glass; and men have said,
Age after age, in rapture and despair,
Love's poor few words, before mine image there.

I live, and am immortal; in mine eyes
The sorrow of the world, and on my lips
The joy of life, mingle to me me wise;
Yet now the day is darkened with eclipse:
Who is there lives for beauty. Still am I
The torch, but where's the moth that still dares die?

May 20, 1899.

LAUS MORTIS

I BRING to thee, for love, white roses, delicate Death!
White lilies of the valley, dropping gentle tears,
The white camellia, the seal of perfect years,
The misty white azalea, flickering as a breath,
White flowers I bring, and all the flowers I bring for thee,
Discreet and comforting Death! for those pale hands of thine;
O hands that I have fled, soft hands now laid on mine,
Softer than these white flowers of life, thy hands to me,
Most comfortable Death, mother of many dreams,
And gatherer of many wandering dreams of men,
Dreams that come desolately flying back again,
With soiled and quivering wings, from undiscovered streams.
I have been fearful of thee, mother, all life long,
For I have loved a warm, alluring, treacherous bride,
Life, and she loved thee not; to hold me from thy side,
She closed her arms about my heart, to do thee wrong.
O gay and bitter bride of such divine desires,
Too fiercely passionate Life, that wast so prodigal
Of thine eternal moments, at the end of all
Take my forgiveness: I have passed through all thy fires.
Nothing can hurt me now, and having gained and lost
All things, and having loved, and having done with life,
I come back to thy arms, mother, and now all strife
Ceases; and every homeward-flying dream, wind-tossed,
My soul that looks upon thy face and understands,
My throbbing heart that at thy touch is quieted,
And all that once desired, and all desire now dead,
Are gathered to the peace and twilight of thy hands.

March 14–23, 1896.

TO NIGHT

I HAVE loved wind and light,
And the bright sea,
But, holy and most secret Night,
Not as I love and have loved thee.

God, like all highest things,
Hides light in shade,
And in the night His visitings
To sleep and dreams are clearliest made.

Love, that knows all things well,
Loves the night best;
Joys whereof daylight dares not tell
Are his, and the diviner rest.

And Life, whom day shows plain
His prison-bars,
Feels the close walls and the hard chain
Fade when the darkness brings the stars.

TARRAGONA, *October* 27, 1898.

MONTSERRAT

Peace waits among the hills ;
I have drunk peace,
Here, where the blue air fills
The great cup of the hills,
And fills with peace.

Between the earth and sky,
I have seen the earth
Like a dark cloud go by,
And fade out of the sky ;
There was no more earth.

Here, where the Holy Graal
Brought secret light
Once, from beyond the veil,
I, seeing no Holy Graal,
See divine light.

Light fills the hills with God,
Wind with His breath,
And here, in His abode,
Light, wind, and air praise God,
And this poor breath.

Montserrat, *October* 20, 1898.

AT TARRAGONA

If I could know but when and why
This piece of thoughtless dust begins
To think, and straightway I am I,
And these bright hopes and these brave sins,
That have been freer than the air,
Circle their freedom with my span;
If I could know but why this care
Is mine and not the care of man;
Why, thus unwilling, I rejoice,
And will the good I do not do,
And with the same particular voice
Speak the old folly and the new;
If I could know, seeing my soul
A white ship with a bending sail,
Rudderless, and without a goal,
Fly seaward, humble to the gale,
Why, knowing not from whence I came,
Nor why I seek I know not what,
I bear this heavy, separate name,
While winds and waters bear it not;
And why the unlimited earth delights
In life, not knowing breath from breath,
While I, that count my days and nights,
Fear thought in life, and life in death.

Tarragona, *October* 26, 1898.

AT TOLEDO

The little stones chuckle among the fields :
" We are so small : God will not think of us ;
We are so old already, we have seen
So many generations blunt their ploughs,
Tilling the fields we lie in ; and we dream
Of our first sleep among the ancient hills."
The grass laughs, thinking : " I am born and die,
And born and die, and know not birth or death,
Only the going on of the green earth."
The rivers pass and pass, and are the same,
And I, who see the beauty of the world,
Pass, and am not the same, or know it not.
And know the world no more. O is not this
Some horrible conspiracy of things,
That I have known, and loved and lingered with
All my days through, and now they turn like hosts
Who have grown tired of a delaying guest ?
They cast me out from their eternity :
God is in league with their forgetfulness.

Toledo, *April* 7, 1899.

OLD AGE

It may be, when this city of the nine gates
Is broken down by ruinous old age,
And no one upon any pilgrimage
Comes knocking, no one for an audience waits,
And no bright foraging troop of bandit moods
Rides out on the brave folly of any guest,
But weariness, the restless shadow of rest,
Hoveringly upon the city broods ;
It may be, then, that those remembering
And sleepless watchers on the crumbling towers
Shall lose the count of the disastrous hours
Which God may have grown tired of reckoning.
November 14, 1896.

OPALS

My soul is like this cloudy, flaming opal ring.
The fields of earth are in it, green and glimmering,
The waves of the blue sky, night's purple flower of noon,
The vanishing cold scintillations of the moon,
And the red heart that is a flame within a flame.
And as the opal dies, and is reborn the same,
And all the fire that is its life-blood seems to dart
Through the veined variable intricacies of its heart,
And ever wandering ever wanders back again,
So must my swift soul constant to itself remain.
Opal, have I not been as variable as you ?
But, cloudy opal flaming green and red and blue,
Are you not ever constant in your varying,
Even as my soul, O captive opal of my ring ?

October 16, 1896.

RUBIES

THERE are nine rubies in this Indian ring,
And every blood-red ruby is a part
Of the nine-petalled rose that is my heart,
The elaborate rose of my own fashioning.
Not out of any garden have I sought
The rose that is more brief than dawn or dew :
Stones of the flame and ice, I find in you
The image of the heart that I have wrought.
For you are cold and burn as those with fire,
For you are hard, yet veil soft depths below,
And each divided ruby seems to glow
With the brief passion of its own desire.
Rose of my heart, shall this too be the same ?
For, when one light catches the wandering rays,
They rush together in one consuming blaze
Of indivisible and ecstatic flame.

November 10, 1896.

DEGREES OF LOVE

When your eyes opened to mine eyes,
Without desire, without surprise,
I knew your soul awoke to see
All, dreams foretold, but could not be,
Yet loving love, not loving me.

When your eyes drooped before mine eyes,
As though some secret made them wise,
Some wisdom veiled them secretly,
I knew your heart began to be
In love with love, in love with me.

When your eyes fawned against my eyes,
With beaten hunger, and with cries,
In bitter pride's humility,
Love, wholly mine, had come to be
Hatred of love for loving me.

February 21, 1898.

THE PRICE

Pity all faithless women who have loved. None knows
How much it hurts a woman to do wrong to love.
The mother who has felt the child within her move,
Shall she forget her child, and those ecstatic throes?

Then pity faithless women who have loved. These have
Murdered within them something born out of their pain.
These mothers of the child whom they have loved and slain
May not so much as lay the child within a grave.

Venice, *May* 11, 1897.

AN ENDING

I WILL go my ways from the city, and then, maybe,
My heart shall forget one woman's voice, and her lips ;
I will arise, and set my face to the sea,
Among stranger-folk and in the wandering ships.
The world is great, and the bounds of it who shall set ?
It may be I shall find, somewhere in the world I shall find,
A land that my feet may abide in ; then I shall forget
The woman I loved, and the years that are left behind.
But, if the ends of the world are not wide enough
To out-weary my heart, and to find for my heart some fold,
I will go back to the city, and her I love,
And look on her face, and remember the days of old.

October 26, 1896.

IN IRELAND

I. ON INISHMAAN: ISLES OF ARAN

In the twilight of the year,
Here, about these twilight ways,
When the grey moth night drew near,
Fluttering on a faint flying,
I would linger out the day's
Delicate and moth-grey dying.

Grey, and faint with sleep, the sea
Should enfold me, and release,
Some old peace to dwell with me.
I would quiet the long crying
Of my heart with mournful peace,
The grey sea's, in its low sighing.
Tillyra Castle, *August* 13, 1896.

II. BY THE POOL AT THE THIRD ROSSES

I HEARD the sighing of the reeds
In the grey pool in the green land,
The sea-wind in the long reeds sighing
Between the green hill and the sand.

I heard the sighing of the reeds
Day after day, night after night;
I heard the whirring wild ducks flying,
I saw the sea-gull's wheeling flight.

I heard the sighing of the reeds
Night after night, day after day,
And I forgot old age, and dying,
And youth that loves, and love's decay.

I heard the sighing of the reeds
At noontide and at evening,
And some old dream I had forgotten
I seemed to be remembering.

I hear the sighing of the reeds:
Is it in vain, is it in vain
That some old peace I had forgotten
Is crying to come back again?

ROSSES POINT, *September* 1, 1896.

III. BY LOUGH-NA-GAR: RAIN.

Into a land of wandering rain
I have fled from a voice that follows me still
To the lonely cabin under the hill;
It cries to me out of the windless rain,
And at night I hear it crying again.

All day the rain is on the lake,
All night the rain drips from the thatch;
I stand at the cabin door and watch
The drifting rain beat on the lake,
And the foam-white ripples gather and break.

The woods are veiled with the rains all day,
The woods crouch under the rains all night,
And the rainy torrents cry from the height;
I hear in the rain, night and day,
A voice crying from far away.

Glenear, *September* 11, 1896.

IV. BY LOUGH-NA-GAR: GREEN LIGHT

The light of the world is of gold,
But the light of the green earth fills
The nestling heart of the hills:
And the world's hours are old,
And the world's thoughts are a dream,
Here, in the ancient place
Of peace, where old sorrows seem
As the half-forgotten face
Of flower-bright cities of gold
That blossom beyond the height
Seems in the earth-green light
That is old as the earth is old.

Glenear, *September* 13, 1896.

V. IN THE WOOD OF FINVARA

I HAVE grown tired of sorrow and human tears ;
Life is a dream in the night, a fear among fears,
A naked runner lost in a storm of spears.

I have grown tired of rapture and love's desire ;
Love is a flaming heart, and its flames aspire
Till they cloud the soul in the smoke of a windy fire.

I would wash the dust of the world in a soft green flood :
Here, between sea and sea, in the fairy wood,
I have found a delicate, wave-green solitude.

Here, in a fairy wood, between sea and sea,
I have heard the song of a fairy bird in a tree,
And the peace that is not in the world has flown to me.

TILLYRA CASTLE, *August* 23, 1896.

SPAIN

TO JOSEFA

Josefa, when you sing,
With clapping hands, the sorrows of your Spain,
And all the bright-shawled ring
Laugh and clap hands again,
I think how all the sorrows were in vain.

The footlights flicker and spire
In tongues of flame before your tiny feet,
My warm-eyed gipsy, higher,
And in your eyes they meet
More than their light, more than their golden heat.

You sing of Spain, and all
Clap hands for Spain and you, and for the song;
One dances, and the hall
Rings like a beaten gong
With louder-handed clamours of the throng.

Spain, that with dancing mirth
Tripped lightly to the precipice, and fell
Until she felt the earth,
Suddenly, and knew well
That to have fallen through dreams is to touch hell;

To Josefa

Spain, brilliantly arrayed,
Decked for disaster, on disaster hurled,
Here, as in masquerade,
Mimes, to amuse the world,
Her ruin, a dancer rouged and draped and curled.

Mother of chivalry,
Mother of many sorrows borne for God,
Spain of the saints, is she
A slave beneath the rod,
A merry slave, and in her own abode?

She, who once found, has lost
A world beyond the waters, and she stands
Paying the priceless cost,
Lightly, with lives for lands,
Flowers in her hair, castanets in her hands.

MALAGA, *February* 16, 1899.

VENETIAN NIGHT

Her eyes in the darkness shone, in the twilight shed
By the gondola bent like the darkness over her head.
Softly the gondola rocked, lights came and went;
A white glove shone as her black fan lifted and leant
Where the silk of her dress, the blue of a bittern's wing,
Rustled against my knee, and, murmuring
The sweet slow hesitant English of a child,
Her voice was articulate laughter, her soul smiled.
Softly the gondola rocked, lights came and went;
From the sleeping houses a shadow of slumber leant
Over our heads like a wing, and the dim lagoon,
Rustling with silence, slumbered under the moon.
Softly the gondola rocked, and a pale light came
Over the waters, mild as a silver flame;
She lay back, thrilling with smiles, in the twilight shed
By the gondola bent like the darkness over her head;
I saw her eyes shine subtly, then close awhile:
I remember her silence, and, in the night, her smile.

Venice, *May* 19, 1897.

DREAMS IN ROME

What is it that sings a sleepy tune in my head?
Some faint old forgotten moon that is dead?
I will arise, for the dreams are about my bed.

O is it in vain, is it in vain I have come?
Dark was the road in coming, and white the foam.
Is there no rest for me here? are there dreams in Rome?
Rome, *February* 8, 1897.

PALM SUNDAY: NAPLES

Because it is the day of Palms,
Carry a palm for me,
Carry a palm in Santa Chiara,
And I will watch the sea ;
There are no palms in Santa Chiara
To-day or any day for me.

I sit and watch the little sail
Lean sideways on the sea,
The sea is blue from here to Sorrento,
And the sea-wind comes to me,
And I see the white clouds lift from Sorrento
And the dark sail lean upon the sea.

I have grown tired of all these things,
And what is left for me ?
I have no place in Santa Chiara,
There is no peace upon the sea ;
But carry a palm in Santa Chiara,
Carry a palm for me.

Naples, *April* 11, 1897.

THE COMING OF SPRING: MADRID

Spring is come back, and the little voices are calling,
The birds are calling, the little green buds on the trees,
A song in the street, and an old and sleepy tune;
All the sounds of the spring are falling, falling,
Gentle as rain, on my heart, and I hear all these
As a sick man hears men talk from the heart of a swoon.

The clamours of spring are the same old delicate noises,
The earth renews its magical youth at a breath,
And the whole world whispers a well-known, secret thing;
And I hear, but the meaning has faded out of the voices;
Something has died in my heart: is it death or sleep?
I know not, but I have forgotten the meaning of spring.

Madrid, *April* 15, 1899.

SEPTEMBER IDYLL: IN THE HAMMOCK: CHAMÉANE

A sky of green and gold, tremulous, delicate,
Starred with pale blue, and bright with little voices ; wind
Lifting the golden outer fringe, autumn has thinned ;
A yellow leaf drops rustling, and another : wait,
The leaves begin to whisper, and the voices cease :
I hear the silence ; but a voice flutters again,
A little, fluting voice, soft, piercing, as the rain ;
I close mine eyes, and all my body sways with peace.
Delicate, tremulous, seen under eyelids closed.
The sky of green and gold sways over me, and seems
To fill the languid soul with the desire of dreams ;
But the sky fades, and only inner eyelids, rosed
With filtered sunlight falling, shadow as they pass
Not even dreams ; until a trailing hand perceives,
Sudden, the earth again, in the crisp touch of leaves,
And the arresting slender fingers of the grass.

Chaméane, *September* 17, 1898.

HASCHISCH

Behind the door, beyond the light,
Who is it waits there in the night?
When he has entered he will ſtand,
Imposing with his silent hand
Some silent thing upon the night.

Behold the image of my fear.
O rise not, move not, come not near!
That moment, when you turned your face,
A demon seemed to leap through space;
His geſture ſtrangled me with fear.

And yet I am the lord of all,
And this brave world magnifical,
Veiled in so variable a miſt
It may be rose or amethyſt,
Demands me for the lord of all!

Who said the world is but a mood
In the eternal thought of God?
I know it, real though it seem,
The phantom of a haschisch dream
In that insomnia which is God.

Paris, Turin, *December* 20, 1896.

TO THE MERCHANTS OF BOUGHT DREAMS

I BUY no more from merchants of bought dreams,
For I have greater memories than these bring
Back from their cloudy-footed wandering
In the unpopulous air ; this magic seems
Indeed a key unlocking crystal doors
That whiten on the unopening mountain-side,
But I can set the gates of treasure wide,
Beyond the last land where the last sea roars,
I have a kingdom under my command
More than the kingdom of these fantasies ;
The shadow of the world darkens my eyes,
And I see clear in the shadow ; on my hand
I wear the little ring which, waked to fire,
Calls up the lower powers made serviceable :
And earth and time and space and heaven and hell
Blossom to be the flower of my desire.
I have come out of the bewildering mists,
For I have learned a more excelling art ;
The world is a pulsation of my heart,
In me the beauty of the world exists,
O what is this that like a torrent streams
In widening waves of living light that pierce
The dark of the transfigured universe ?
I buy no more from merchants of bought dreams !

PARSIFAL

Rose of the garden's roses, what pale wind
Has scattered those flushed petals in an hour,
And the close leaves of all the alleys thinned,
What re-awakening wind,
O sad enchantress banished to a flower ?

Parsifal has out-blushed the roses : dead
Is all the garden of the world's delight,
And every rose of joy has drooped its head,
And for sweet shame is dead ;
Sweet joy being shameful in the pure fool's sight.

Bayreuth, *August* 1897.

THE LAST MEMORY

When I am old, and think of the old days,
And warm my hands before a little blaze,
Having forgotten love, hope, fear, desire,
I shall see, smiling out of the pale fire,
One face, mysterious and exquisite;
And I shall gaze, and ponder over it,
Wondering, was it Leonardo wrought
That stealthy ardency, where passionate thought
Burns inward, a revealing flame, and glows
To the last ecstasy, which is repose?
Was it Bronzino, those Borghese eyes?
And, musing thus among my memories,
O unforgotten! you will come to seem,
As pictures do, remembered, some old dream.
And I shall think of you as something strange,
And beautiful, and full of helpless change,
Which I beheld and carried in my heart;
But you, I loved, will have become a part
Of the eternal mystery, and love
Like a dim pain; and I shall bend above
My little fire, and shiver, being cold,
When you are no more young, and I am old.

Vienna, *September* 9, 1897.

TOYS

I HAVE laid you away as we lay
The toys of a little dead child,
You know you are safe in my heart;
You know I have set you apart
In my heart, and hid you away,
Because joy that prattled and smiled
In the heart becomes grief to the heart,
Laying its youth away
With the toys of a little dead child.

February 15, 1898.

PERFECT GRIEF

The wandering, wise, outcast sons
Of Pharaoh, the dark roofless ones,
Taught me this wisdom : If Death come,
And take thy dear one, be thou dumb,
Nor gratify with suppliant breath
The attentive insolence of Death.
Suffer thy dear one to depart
In silence ; silent in thy heart,
From this forth, be thy dear one's name.
So I, that would not put to shame
So dear a memory dead, repeat
No more the sweet name once too sweet,
Nor, from that buried name, remove
The haughty silence of my love.

Paris, *December* 6, 1896.

THE DREAM

O, IF the world I make
With these eyes be a dream
And Love, that is life, but seem
To choose a shade from a shade,
Then let me wake!
I have loved, not Love, but a pale,
Mortal woman, and made
The whole world for her sake;
Let the sight of mine eyes fail,
And the whole world fade:
I have dreamed: let me wake!

August 2, 1898.

WEARINESS

I

THERE are grey hours when I drink of indifference; all things fade
Into the grey of a twilight that covers my soul with its sky;
Scarcely I know that this shade is the world, or this burden is I;
And life, and art, and love, and death, are the shades of a shade.

Then, in those hours, I hear old voices murmur aloud,
And memory tires of the hopelessly hoping desire, her regret;
I hear the remembering voices, and I forget to forget;
The world as a cloud drifts by, or I drift by as a cloud.
NAPLES, *April* 6, 1897.

II

I am weary at heart, yet not weary with sorrow, nor weary with pain;
I would that an eager sorrow returned to me out of the deep;
I could fold my hands in the morning, lie down on my bed again:
O Sorrow, angel of Joy, re-awaken my heart from its sleep!

I am wearier than the old, when they sit and smile in the sun,
Dreaming of sorrowful things, grown happy and dim to their sight;
But I dream in the morning, my daylight is over, my day's work done:
I am old at heart, for my sorrow is sleepy, and nods before night.
December 31, 1897.

WIND ON THE SEA

The loneliness of the sea is in my heart,
And the wind is not more lonely than this grey mind.
I have thought far thoughts, I have loved, I have loved, and
I find
Love gone, thought weary, and I, alas, left behind.

The loneliness of my heart is in the sea,
And my mind is not more lonely than this grey wind.
Who shall stay the feet of the sea, or bind
The wings of the wind? only the feet of mankind
Grow old in the place of their sorrow, and bitter is the heart
That may not wander as the wind or return as the sea.

March 13, 1898.

A TUNE

A FOOLISH rhythm turns in my idle head
As a windmill turns in the wind on an empty sky.
Why is it when love, which men call deathless, is dead,
That memory, men call fugitive, will not die?
Is love not dead? yet I hear that tune if I lie
Dreaming awake in the night on my lonely bed,
And an old thought turns with the old tune in my head
As a windmill turns in the wind on an empty sky.

ROME, *February* 13, 1897.

THE ONE FACE

Fair faces come again,
As at sunsetting
The stars without number ;
Or as dreams dreamed in vain
To a heart forgetting
Come back with slumber.

Love covered both mine eyes
In a sweet twilight
With his two hands folded ;
Foolish to be most wise,
In the light of thy light
See as my soul did !

O Love, that, seeing all,
Sweetly dost cover
The eyes of thy loved ones,
Let me no more recall
The dim hours over
And the one face loved once !

But, having long been blind,
To behold those graces
I have lost with love now,
Let me behold and find
If all fair faces
In the world are enough now !

Birchington-on-Sea, *March* 10, 1898.

THE LAST PITY

Now I have seen your face,
My tears are all for you.
Where are the lonely grace,
The pride, the lovely ways I knew?

The flower that blossomed fair
When winds and clouds arrayed
The shadows of the air,
Plucked, though with jealous care, must fade.

And in your wintry eyes,
With re-awakenings moved
A moment, I surprise
Nostalgia of the skies they loved.

Old sorrows I have borne
In patience for your sake,
Not without help of scorn:
From dreams, now twice forlorn, I wake.

I hear the old sorrows call,
Now, from your heart alone;
And scorn's relief recall
With pity which is all your own.

December 14, 1897.

WANDERER'S SONG

I HAVE had enough of women, and enough of love,
But the land waits, and the sea waits, and day and night is enough;
Give me a long white road, and the grey wide path of the sea,
And the wind's will and the bird's will, and the heart-ache still in me.

Why should I seek out sorrow, and give gold for strife?
I have loved much and wept much, but tears and love are not life;
The grass calls to my heart, and the foam to my blood cries up,
And the sun shines and the road shines, and the wine's in the cup.

I have had enough of wisdom, and enough of mirth,
For the way's one and the end's one, and it's soon to the ends of the earth;
And it's then good-night and to bed, and if heels or heart ache,
Well, it's sound sleep and long sleep, and sleep too deep to wake.

BIRCHINGTON-ON-SEA, *March* 10, 1898.

EPILOGUE

O LITTLE waking hour of life out of sleep!
When I consider the many million years
I was not yet, and the many million years
I shall not be, it is easy to think of the sleep
I shall sleep for the second time without hopes or fears.
Surely my sleep for the million years was deep?
I remember no dreams from the million years, and it seems
I may sleep for as many million years without dreams.

LEIGH-ON-SEA, *April* 22, 1898.

THE LOOM OF DREAMS

THE LOOM OF DREAMS

I BROIDER the world upon a loom,
I broider with dreams my tapestry ;
Here in a little lonely room
I am master of earth and sea,
And the planets come to me.

I broider my life into the frame,
I broider my love, thread upon thread ;
The world goes by with its glory and shame,
Crowns are bartered and blood is shed :
I sit and broider my dreams instead.

And the only world is the world of my dreams,
And my weaving the only happiness ;
For what is the world but what it seems ?
And who knows but that God, beyond our guess,
Sits weaving worlds out of loneliness ?

February 22, 1900.

THE GREY WOLF

The grey wolf comes again : I had made fast
The door with chains ; how has the grey wolf passed
My threshold ? I have nothing left to give ;
Go from me now, grey wolf, and let me live !
I have fed you once, given all you would, given all
I had to give. I have been prodigal ;
I am poor now, the table is but spread
With water and a little wheaten bread ;
You have taken all I ever had from me :
Go from me now, grey wolf, and let me be !

The grey wolf, crouching by the bolted door,
Waits, watching for his food upon the floor ;
I see the old hunger and the old thirst of blood
Rise up, under his eyelids, like a flood ;
What shall I do that the grey wolf may go ?
This time, I have no store of meat to throw ;
He waits ; but I have nothing, and I stand
Helpless, and his eyes fasten on my hand.
O grey wolf, grey wolf, will you not depart,
This time, unless I feed you with my heart ?

December 15, 1900.

THE DESIRE OF LIFE

O BROKEN, old, weary desire of life,
Unquenchable flame of desire,
That wakens, like a well-nigh wasted fire,
Now in my heart, and springs
Upward on shining wings,
And stirs rejoicing for the unending strife.
Flame of desire,
Flame of the unquenchable desire of life,
What vehement spirit brings
Hope to my soul that had forgotten hope?
Is life yet waiting me,
That dumbly and disconsolately grope
Among dead things,
Chained living to the corpse of memory?
Bid me not stir
Out of the heavy shadows that impend
Sullenly on my head.
If this be but some mocking messenger,
Not life but fancy sends
To draw me from the places of the dead
To a forgotten sunlight where all ends?
Bid me not stir,
If all shall be again
As all has been: I have no heart to win
A glorious joy that shall return to pain
Ere I have drunk its sweetness in.
Nay, leave me quite alone,
Life, and the old, aching desire of life,

Apart from peace, apart from strife,
In this dull apathy
That I have somewhile known
Since dead desire has claimed me for its own.
And yet, and yet,
If this be very life that comes to me,
If this bright voice that cries " Hope and forget ! "
Be verily the voice of mine heart,
Wiser than I,
Shall I, that hunger, set the spread feast by,
Or, thirsting, bid the cupbearer depart ?
O life, dear enemy,
My soul so dimly understands,
Awakening in its cereclothes among the dead,
Life, that so long hast had thy will of me,
Do with me as thou wilt ;
I hold both hands out for the cup,
I hold both hands out famishing for bread ;
And shall thy cup be spilt,
And shall the bread crumble out of my hands,
O Life, dear friend, so like an enemy ?

February 8, 1900.

THE ECSTASY

What is this reverence in extreme delight
That waits upon my kisses as they storm,
Vehemently, this height
Of steep and inaccessible delight ;
And seems with newer ecstasy to warm
Their slackening ardour, and invite,
From nearer heaven, the swarm
Of hiving stars with mortal sweetness down ?
Never before
Have I endured an exaltation
So exquisite in anguish, and so sore
In promise and possession of full peace.
Cease not, O nevermore
Cease,
To lift my joy, as upon windy wings,
Into that infinite ascension, where,
In baths of glittering air,
It finds a heaven and like an angel sings.
Heaven waits above,
There where the clouds and fastnesses of love
Lift earth into the skies ;
And I have seen the glimmer of the gates,
And twice or thrice
Climbed half the difficult way,
Only to say
Heaven waits,
Only to fall away from paradise.
But now, O what is this

Mysterious and uncapturable bliss
That I have never known, yet seems to be
Simple as breath, and easy as a smile,
And older than the earth?
Now but a little while
This ultimate ecstasy
Has parted from its birth,
Now but a little while been wholly mine,
Yet am I utterly possessed
By the delicious tyrant and divine
Child, this importunate guest.

January 20, 1900.

BEATA BEATRIX

Lay your head back ; and now, kiss me again !
Kneel there, and do not kiss me ; let me hold
Your cheeks between my hands ; your cheeks are cold
And all your chin tightens, as if with pain,
And your eyes close upon the ecstasy,
Like one who dies in the agony of peace.
So I have seen the face of Beatrice,
In pictures, dead, and in a memory
Seeing the face of Dante out of heaven.
O, out of heaven, when for my sake you lean,
Till not a breath of the world may come between
Our lips that are our souls, and all the seven
Delighted heavens lean down with you, to bless
The sacrament of joy, then, with such eyes,
Closed on so still a new-born Paradise,
You endure the martyrdom of happiness.

February 11, 1900.

THE FLAG

I LAY a tattered flag before your feet
In sign of conquest. Conquerors are proud
Of a rent flag: each mouth that cries aloud
Cries of a battle now twice won; defeat
Gives up the right to every victory.
It is my life: I bring it torn and stained
Out of the battles I have lost and gained;
Once captured, won back from the enemy
At a great loss; yet, here I hold it still,
My own, to render up as now I do;
I render it up joyfully to you,
Choosing defeat: do with it as you will.

February 19, 1900.

INVOCATION

I PRAY to the old kindness of the Earth,
Which is a spirit moving in the world,
Closer to life than human life, and deep
Beyond the beating of our passionate hearts,
That are too troubled with the pain of love
To be kind always : O, be kind to her,
She is so close to you, Earth of the winds !
There is a healing pity in your heart,
For us who are so soon weary of joy,
And half in love with sorrow : but she is joy ;
Be to her the eternal thirst, that is
Itself the drinking of renewed delight !
She is the wildest little wave of the sea,
She is the topmost branch that nods in the sun,
And she is sister to the flying wings ;
She breathes as if the whole earth breathed in her ;
Vehement breaths, rocking a constant breast ;
She has the lifted angers of the hawk,
In gladness, and the tiger's purity ;
Her body is as simple as the grass.
O she is close to you, Earth of the winds !
Be near her, be a grave and ancient peace,
As of a mother, comfortingly kind,
Who loves, and has no fear, and understands ;
Be to her love in beauty, for she loves
Beauty, a kindness in the natural air.
Your children love her : horses love her hand,
The dog gives up his rebel's heart to her,

And the luxurious wisdom of the cat
Approves her, in a delicate-footed choice ;
Your children love her, giving love for love.
She is your child too ; follow, follow her
Where I may never follow ; be to her
All I would be if this poor mortal love,
This little flame that lights and cannot warm,
Like a poor lonely candle all night long
Seen in a garret-window flickering,
Were mighty and immortal as the sun.
Follow her thou, and if her heart forget
That she has ever shared with me her joy,
Do thou remember always, as my heart
Remembers, and be happiness to her
Though happiness were in forgetting me.

January 23, 1900.

SONG OF LOVE'S COMING

Love comes unawares
(In my arms sighing).
Ah me, the many cares
Between his birth and dying!

Love comes like a child
(In my arms sighing).
Ah me, the hearts beguiled
Between his birth and dying!

Love comes and will not go
(In my arms sighing).
Ah me, the heart's woe
Mine until my dying!

December 19, 1899.

THE ADORATION

Why have you brought me myrrh
And frankincense and gold?
Lay at the feet of her
Whom you have loved of old
Your frankincense and gold?

I have brought frankincense
And myrrh and gold to you
From weary lands far hence
That I have journeyed through
To come at last to you.

I cannot take your gold
And frankincense and myrrh;
My heart was growing cold
While you were following her:
Take back your gold and myrrh.

Too late I come to you
With prayers of frankincense.
Pure gold, sweet myrrh, ye too,
Scorned, must go hence, far hence
As smoking frankincense.

December 19, 1899.

THE ONE DESIRE

If I think of your soul, I see
Your body's beauty; and then
I pray to your body again,
And your soul answers me.
So to possess you whole,
Twofold ever the same,
Come to me light or flame,
Come to me body or soul!

December 22, 1899.

THE ALCHEMY

No, we are strangers yet,
The divine alchemy
Not yet, or vainly, has set
Our longing currents free.

We meet, what loving foes,
Who vainly would combine
Cross virtues, that dispose
The draught to be divine.

Waiting we know not what,
Lonely, and side by side,
Desiring only not
To part, yet not to abide,

We linger, each aware
Of that which both have missed,
And pitying the despair
Of the proud alchemist.

New Year's Eve, 1899.

SLEEP

What is good for fever, except sleep?
What is good for love, but to forget?
Bury love deep,
Deeper than sound sleep,
And let
Fever drowse a little, and the heart forget.

Time shall heal fever, if death come not;
What shall heal love, except only death?
Though joy be forgot,
If death quiet not
Thy breath,
Time shall waken sorrow in the heart till death.

Brighton, *December* 23, 1899.

THE SHADOW

When I am walking sadly or triumphantly,
With eyes that brood upon the smouldering thought of you,
And long desire and brief delight leap up anew,
Why is it that the eyes of all men turn to me?
There's pity in the eyes of women as they turn,
And in the eyes of men self-pity, fear, desire:
As those who see the far-off shadow of a fire
Gaze earnestly, and wonder if their rooftrees burn.

January 6, 1900.

REST

The peace of a wandering sky,
Silence, only the cry
Of the crickets, suddenly still,
A bee on the window-sill,
A bird's wing, rushing and soft,
Three flails that tramp in the loft,
Summer murmuring
Some sweet, slumberous thing,
Half asleep; but thou, cease,
Heart, to hunger for peace,
Or, if thou must find rest,
Cease to beat in my breast.

Prague, *August* 13, 1899.

ISOLATION

When your lips seek my lips they bring
That sorrowful and outcast thing
My heart home from its wandering.

Then, ere your lips have loosed their hold,
I feel my heart's heat growing cold,
And my heart shivers and grows cold.

When your lips leave my lips, again
I feel the old doubt and the old pain
Tighten about me like a chain.

After the pain, after the doubt,
A lonely darkness winds about
My soul like death, and shuts you out.

June 13, 1900.

THE PRAYER

Dear, if I might love better for your sake,
I would not care though you should love me less ;
I love you more than to consent to take
Happiness and not give you happiness.

Though I were happier if you loved me more,
And happier if I loved you less, I pray
That though each day less than the day before
You love me, I may love you more each day.

August 1, 1900.

THE BLIND HEART

Be still, O hunger of heart, and let pity speak :
Her soul is a wandering bird, and its wings are weak,
Her heart is a little flame, it pants at a sigh :
O blind and pitiless heart, it is love going by.

If I had only pity, and a little rest,
Peace as a rose would blossom again in my breast ;
If I had only patience, and let love free,
As a bird to its nest, my love would come to me.

But I have neither patience nor pity at all,
And I hold her heart in my hand, and I let it fall ;
I hold the joy of my life in my heart, and I seem
As one who walks and lament in a mournful dream.

June 23, 1900.

LOVE AND SORROW

I KNOW not if the love be dead
I sang of once, or only asleep ;
The feet of my joy no longer tread
In the pulses of my heart : is this
The measure that they used to keep ?
Now all the old tunes are sung amiss,
And all the old words they said are said ;
Is it that the old love is dead,
Or sleeps, and will awaken from sleep ?

O love, not dead, so soon to awake,
Too idle-happy to know content,
Sorrow has come : come, sorrow, make
The feet of my joy remember soon ;
My heart remembers the words that went,
Once, to an old and happy tune,
When love was grave, for no sorrow's sake ;
Shall love, that slept, again be awake,
And this kind sorrow bring back content ?

March 14, 1900.

THE DESIRE OF THE HEART

Heart, is there anything to desire ?
Feet, is there anywhere to go ?
A way for the feet, where the winds blow
The dust from the heart, and a way for the heart
Where the kindness of love shall never tire,
Nor the feet be tired with the length of the way ?
Shall the heart stay and the feet stay,
And the voice of the wind crying : Depart ?

O my heart, O my feet, rest, be at rest !
They are tired, they are tired of wandering.
O my heart, O my feet, is there anything
Worth the desire out of all that is ?
Wandering ones, quiet is best,
Cover the thoughts and the voices deep,
And let me bind my feet with a sleep,
And blind my heart with a sleepy kiss !

April 20, 1901.

THE PRISON

I AM the prisoner of my love of you.
I pace my soul, as prisoned culprits do,
You stand like any gaoler at the gate,
And I am fevered, chill, and desolate,
Weary with walking the damp dungeon-floor,
Cursing your name, and loving you the more
For crying curses. If I could but keep
Your thought away but just enough to sleep
One calm night through, I might enjoy the stars ;
But now I see beyond my prison-bars,
Night and day, nothing ; only iron rust,
And windows blackened over with wet dust.

While I was slumbering, half awake, I heard
A voice that spoke a little poisonous word,
Subtly against my ear ; it said that all
These barred inventions are fantastical,
These four unfriendly walls I touch and see,
A wilful dream and no reality,
And that I need but waken to be free.
A cunning but a foolish voice ! I know
Your walls are solid, stablished long ago,
Not for one only : here's name after name,
Carved on the stones : I'll add my name to them.

Outside, I hear, sometimes, far off yet loud,
A sound as of the voices of a crowd,
And hands that beat against a gate ; I hear
Cries of revolt, and only these I fear.
'Tis you they strike at : what have I to do

With freedom, if 'tis liberty from you ?
I am content with this unhappiness ;
Why should the world, that has no soul to guess
The joy and miracle of my distress,
Strive to break in, and ravish me from pain,
That, being lost, I should seek out again ?

O, I was friends once with the world, I went
The world's way, and was sunnily content
Only to be a pilgrim, and to roam
The grey dust and the flying-footed foam.
My heart knew not of bondage, I was full
Of young desire, the earth was beautiful,
And women's faces were a light that showed
The way at every turning of the road,
And I had never looked as deep as tears
Into a woman's heart.

Unthinkable years,
I loitered through with scarce returning feet,
And dreamed that only freedom could be sweet !
How, in my prison, I stand pitying
That gipsy leisure for an idle thing,
A memory not worth remembering !
I am alone now, miserable, bound
With chains that crawl behind me on the ground,
Sleepless with hate and with the ache of thought,
My pride of triumph broken down and brought
Into a sullen quelled captivity :
Alas, I only fear to be set free !

August 12, 1900.

THE REGRET

It seems to me, dearest, if you were dead,
And thought returned to me after the tears,
The hopeless first oblivious tears, were shed,
That this would be the bitterest, not that I
Had lost for all sad hours of all my years
The joys enjoyed and happy hours gone by;
Ah no, but that while we had time to live
And love before the coming of the night,
Yet knew the hours of daylight fugitive,
Proud as a child who will not what he would,
Sometimes I did not love you as I might,
Sometimes you did not love me when you could.

March 22, 1900.

THE BOND

O BELOVED, and stranger to me than my foe,
And nearer to me than my breath, and my peace and my strife,
What is it that binds us straitly together? Life;
Body to body: soul to soul, do I know?
I know that your hands speak to my hands, and my hands
Speak to your hands with an irresistible desire;
We are blown together as fire is blown into fire,
We return as the wandering tide returns to the sands.
Is it love, is it longing? I know not, care not, alas!
Something cries, and a cry answers a cry.
If I speak, you hear in your heart; when you call, it is I:
Soul of my life, let us live! for the hours pass.

September 19, 1900.

THE SICK HEART

O SICK heart, be at rest!
Is there nothing that I can do
To quiet your crying in my breast?
Will nothing comfort you?

"I am sick of a malady
There is but one thing can assuage:
Cure me of youth, and, see,
I will be wise in age!"

April 18, 1900.

THE CRYING OF WATER

O WATER, voice of my heart, crying in the sand,
All night long crying with a mournful cry,
As I lie and listen, and cannot understand
The voice of my heart in my side or the voice of the sea,
O water, crying for rest, is it I, is it I?
All night long the water is crying to me.

Unresting water, there shall never be rest
Till the last moon droop and the last tide fail,
And the fire of the end begin to burn in the west;
And the heart shall be weary and wonder and cry like the sea,
All life long crying without avail,
As the water all night long is crying to me.

September 18, 1900.

FAUSTUS AND HELEN

FAUSTUS

WHY am I fettered with eternal change?
I follow after changeless love, and find
Nothing but change; I seek, and seem to find;
I find a shaken star within a pool;
A little water troubles it; I lean
Closer, and my own shadow blots it out.
Yet I desire the star, not this bright ghost.
I take a woman's heart into my hand;
It sighs for love, and trembles among sighs,
And half awakens into a delicate sleep,
And calls to me in whispers out of dreams.
Then the dream passes, and I too know I have dreamed.
No woman has found me faithless; it is she
Who shows me my own image in her eyes,
And in my own eyes finds a shadowy friend
That is her own desire beholding her.
Now I have followed wisdom long enough;
Wisdom is changeless, but a barren thing;
I desire love, and peace with love, and love
Without this mortal penalty of change.
Why is it that the world was made so ill,
Or we that suffer it, or this soul its toy,
This body that is the image of the world,
Made ill, or made for a pastime? he that made it
Loved not the thing he made, or tired of it,
Or could not end it; for he gave us life,
And the body, and therewith he gave us dreams;

And having made one substance of the soul
And body, wrought division, and flung his war
Into the little passionate city of man.
Yet, if this little city full of foes
Could cast out dreams, these strong invading dreams,
Might we not take kind peace into our midst?
Peace without love there may not be; and yet
I have read in books that love may come with rest,
Love may desire and yet be satisfied,
Love may brim up the body's need of love
And leave the soul unhurt; it is this soul
That cries in us, and suffers, and kills content;
The soul, a foolish vagabond thing, that strays
Wanton about the world, sleeps ill of nights,
Treads down the fruitful edges of the fields
That ripen towards a harvest, and lives on alms.
Could I but hold this slothful and restless soul
The prisoner of to-day, build up to-day
Into a rampart, shut to-morrow out,
Then I might live, and not run after life,
Then I might love, and not see only the pale
Vanishing of love in an uncapturable mist.
When Helen lived, men loved, and Helen was:
Did Helen dream, or men, seeing Helen, dream
Of more than Helen? O perfect beauty, made
Of mortal flesh for some immortal end,
To be the bride of every man's desire
While beauty is remembered, I do think
That Helen grew up with the growth of flowers,
And shared the simple, happy life of beasts,
Loved to be loved, and saw men die for her,

Not sorry, not astonished at their death,
A grave and happy woman. Helen is dead
These many thousand years ; but what are years ?
Time is the slave of thought : a little thought
Sets back the clock of the ages ; this hour that strikes
Is not so sure for me as Helen's hour.
I call on Helen : Helen is the thought
I summon with ; I form out of my soul
A bodily Helen, whom these eyes behold.

HELEN

Have I slept long ? You waken me from sleep.
I have forgotten something : what is it ?

FAUSTUS

There is much wisdom in your beauty ; eyes,
That have looked deep into the hearts of men,
When men, setting their lips on them, forgot
All but desire of some forgetfulness,
Remember many secrets ; your eyes are grave
With knowledge of the hearts of many men.

HELEN

I have forgotten all ; if I have looked
Into the hearts of men, I have but seen
A little eager world, like to my own,
A world my own has copied ; they desire
That which I have to give them, I in them
Their own desire.

FAUSTUS

They see you not ; they see
Another phantom Helen in the soul,
And they desire what you can never give.

HELEN

What is the soul, and what is that desire
Of man which Helen cannot satisfy ?

FAUSTUS

O Helen, we are sick, sick of the soul.
It is an ancient malady, and clings
About our blood these many thousand years.
We are born old, and this decrepit soul
Is like a child's inheritance, that pays
The price of others' pleasure ; we are born old,
Old in the heart, and mournful in the brain,
Hunters of shadows, feeders on food of sleep,
Hoarding a little memory till it rots.
We have forgotten day, the instant day,
And that to-morrow never shall be ours.

HELEN

To-morrow never need be ours ; to-day
Is greater than the heart of any man.

FAUSTUS

Nay, not enough to dream a whole dream out.

HELEN

Have not great cities fallen in a day,
And great kings fallen, and the face of the earth

Changed? Is not love, greater than any king,
Born, brought to ripeness, earthed about with dust,
In a day's course? Needs death more than a day?

FAUSTUS

Not love, not death, not cities, not great kings,
Only the little wayward heart of man.

HELEN

I fold my arms about you, and I lay
My hair over your eyes; I hush your lips
Against my heart: there are no sighs in it;
It has forgotten Paris and the man
Whom Paris wronged; how many thousand men
Have died for this poor face they never saw!
It has forgotten Troy. Shut your lids close
And feel my lips, they bend down over you:
Men have died hard in battle that these lips,
My husband had kissed often, might be kissed
By Paris: they are yours, they have not loved
The mouth of any lover in the world
More than they love your eyes; your eyes were sad,
Before you shut them; open your eyes now:
They have forgotten wisdom.

FAUSTUS

Is it a dream?
I have not seen that face except in dreams.

HELEN

A little moment has gone over us,
And it is still to-day.

FAUSTUS

I have slept long.

HELEN

Do not awaken ; yet you have not slept ;
Now you are falling back into your sleep ;
Your eyes remember, they are sad again,
They have not wakened.

FAUSTUS

An immortal sleep,
Gone in an instant ! I have dreamed a dream
Longer than all your years, and it is still
The same long day, and there are hours enough
To feed another dream out of our hearts.

HELEN

Why do you dream if dreaming makes you sad ?
Why do you look at me as if you looked
Into a glass ?

FAUSTUS

I do not know my face ;
I see a wintry bough toss in the wind
When I look close into your eyes. I am sad
Because your beauty is a consuming fire,
And it could set the world in flames, yet not
Burn out the dross of thought from this old heart.
A stranger sits and sees you with my eyes ;
Your lips have kissed them, and they see you still.

HELEN

It is enough to look upon my face,
If you will look upon my face indeed,
And not at dreams that wither and turn to mist.

FAUSTUS

O Helen, it is you that are the dream.
Have I not made you with my urgency,
Made you to my desire out of a mist?
I made you, and you mock me with your life.
I called you as a ghost out of a grave,
I gave you back the likeness of your flesh
Out of my soul, but only not a soul,
I gave you back the salt of life, your soul;
And I entreated you across the dark
And obscure ages, and you came to me,
Awakened, unastonished, out of death.
Ghost of dead Helen, teach me to be no more
The ghost of living Faustus!

HELEN

Must I die twice?
For I remember dying long ago,
And I abhor death only of earthly ills,
Although it end all earthly ills at once.
Must I die twice?

FAUSTUS

You must fade out again
Into the mist, and be a memory.

HELEN

My beauty has been dust so many years
I know not how the memory of it lasts
Among men's minds so long. A woman's praise
Is ended shortly with her youth, and dies
Long before death: do men remember yet?
O Faustus, let me live! The one good thing
Is life, for there is nothing in the grave:
I have been dead, and there is nothing there;
We sleep, and cannot even say, we sleep.
I have loved life, I would live all my days
Twice over; there is nothing I desire
Except to live; death is the end of all:
But now I live, and I would never die.
And yet if death must come, I will die twice,
So I may live my life over again.

FAUSTUS

The colour of the world is washed away,
Helen, and there is nothing in the world
Worth looking on; your eyes have looked on Greece.
Desire not life, there is no room for life,
There is no place for beauty in the world.
I did not call you hither for your peace,
Not for your peace, although I sought for peace
In finding you; and now I cannot find
The peace I sought; this prison of the world,
These massy walls, barred windows, iron bolts,
Would close upon you and suck out your breath
Like a slow sickness; but now rejoice, return

To the universal nothingness of air :
Depart, it is your freedom.

HELEN

I go out
Into a great white darkness, and am afraid.

FAUSTUS

When Helen lived, men loved, and Helen was :
I have seen Helen, Helen was a dream,
I dreamed of something not in Helen's eyes.
What shall the end of all things be ? I wait
Cruel old age, and kinder death, and sleep.

March 21–31, 1901.

THE FOOL OF THE WORLD AND OTHER POEMS

THE FOOL OF THE WORLD: A MORALITY

To Amy Sawyer

The Man.	The Worm.
Death, *as the Fool.*	Youth.
The Spade.	Middle Age.
The Coffin.	Old Age.

The Scene represents a dark wood, in which a Man, dressed as a Pilgrim, is discovered standing.

The Man

This is the wood, and, my heart saith,
This is the sanctuary of Death.
I am afraid: am I not here
To face and question with my fear?
Yet, if I ask and Death reply,
How should I bear it? how should I
Live, knowing what it is to die?

This life is evil, and must end:
But what if Death should be our friend?
This life is full of weariness
And ignorance and blind distress,
And it may be that when man dies
Death, being altogether wise,
Shall take the darkness from his eyes.

But no, he cannot be our friend:
This life is evil, and must end
In evil; every man that lives
Lives but the limit that Death gives,
And Death has seen all beauty pass,
And glory, as the flower of grass,
And nothing is that ever was.

This life is evil, and must end,
Alas! and who shall be our friend?
Though we have seen him through our fears
An old lean crooked man of years,
Death's wisdom must in heaven make dim
The brightest of the Seraphim:
I will kneel down and pray to him.

[*He kneels down.* DEATH *enters as a woman, masked, with a fool's cap on which are seven bells, and a staff of seven bells in her hand.*

DEATH

Come hither, all ye that draw breath:
What would ye of me? I am Death.

THE MAN [*rising to his feet*].

O foolish woman, capped and masked,
Not for your cap and bells I asked:
They make a loud and merry din,
But I was calling Wisdom in.

DEATH [*shaking the bells*].

I am the Fool of the World. Come follow;

As your hopes are my bells hollow,
As my cap are your thoughts vain;
I come and go and come again,
Singing and dancing, and with mirth
Lead the dance of fools on earth
To the tune of my seven bells:
Whither? none returning tells;
The seven bells sing to them: how soon
They fall asleep to the cradle-tune!

THE MAN

What is this folly of lewd breath?
Who shall be wise if this be Death?

DEATH [*raising the staff of bells solemnly, like a sceptre*]

I, of all proud frail mortal things,
Choose for my own the greatest kings,
The bravest captains, the most wise
Doctors, the craftiest lords of lies,
The fairest women; and all these
Praise me, and kneel about my knees;
The glories of the world bow down
When the bells chatter in my crown.
I am the Fool of the World, I must
Lead the fools' dance home to the dust.

THE MAN

If this be Death indeed that saith
Brave sayings in the name of Death,
O Death, take off from us the dread
Of the three makers of our bed:

The Spade, the Coffin strait and low,
The Worm that is our bed-fellow.

DEATH

O men that know me not, afraid
Of Worm, of Coffin, and of Spade,
I will call in my labourers
That they may speak against your fears.

[DEATH *beckons with her staff of bells, and one enters, in mean attire, bearing a spade.*

THE MAN

Oh what is this that comes arrayed
In dusty clothes, and holds a spade?

THE SPADE

I am the builder of the house
Which Death to every guest allows;
I dig the sure foundations deep
In the stony soil of sleep;
There is no noise about the doors,
No noise upon the ancient floors,
Only the graveworm's dusty feet
Walk softly to and fro in it.

[DEATH *beckons with her staff of bells, and one enters, in black clothes, bearing a coffin.*

THE MAN

O who is this that bears, alack,
So strait a bed upon his back?

THE COFFIN

I am the only bed that gives
Sleep without dreams to all that lives,
An unawakening sleep to all;
Sleep sweetly till you hear the call:
It may be one shall bid you rise,
At cock-crow, with untroubled eyes.

[DEATH *beckons with her staff of bells, and one enters, hooded and cloaked in rust-coloured clothes.*

THE MAN

What is this thing of fearful form
That wears the livery of the worm?

THE WORM

I am the Worm: have I not fed
Sweetly upon the bones of the dead,
Sweetly on bones that have been kings?
No tenderer is the flesh that clings
About their bones than this that may
Wrap up a beggar turned to clay.
Beauty is the one morsel worth
The biting of the worm of earth;
Surely the flesh of Helen made
A most sweet morsel: therein stayed
The sap that moved her flesh to fault,
For it was seasoned with pure salt.

THE MAN

Though sexton Spade and Coffin bed
Be gentle to us, being dead,

Though, like dead Helen, in the ground
We with our bedfellow sleep sound,
O Death, we know not if these know
The whole long way we have to go.

DEATH

O men that know me not, and dread
Sleep, and the dreams about the bed,
I will call in my guests, that wait
To speak with you, without the gate:
Surely of them ye shall hear truth.

[DEATH *shakes her bells and beckons to three figures, differently dressed, of whom one is young, one of middle age, and one old.*

YOUTH

We three, the guests of Death, are Youth,
And Middle Age, and Age. Bow down,
Old men, before a zany's crown,
For ye have lived; but I, being young,
And scarce a shadow's length among
The morning roses of the May,
Met this false wanton on the way
And flew to her accursed lure;
Now, for all pleasure, I endure
Earth, and the blind and stagnant night,
And, for most pain, remember light.

DEATH [*lowering the staff of bells*]

What is this spirit of quenchless flame
That cries against my mercy's name?
[*To* MIDDLE AGE.] Speak, and speak truth.

MIDDLE AGE

The noon was high,
And the sun ſteadfast in the ſky,
And all the day's ſtrong middle heat
Weighed on me, and I felt my feet
A little weary of the crowd,
When the seven bells sang aloud;
My heart was full of peace, my life
Was evil, and a place of ſtrife;
I followed, I am here, I had
Neither a sorry heart nor glad.

DEATH

Shall but one spirit, soothed with duſt,
Rise, and remember to be juſt?
Speak, and speak truth, spirit of Age.

AGE

I tottered on my pilgrimage,
My dragging feet could hardly tread
The ſteep and ſtony road that led
By such hard ways to some dim end
I had forgotten, when this friend
Crooked a kind arm under my arm,
And I was there; and I was warm,
And young, and no more scant of breath:
I praise the mercy of good Death.

THE MAN

O Death, these voices, though they speak,
What can they tell us that we seek?

Are not these voices mortal still
That utter the unforgotten will
Of mortal flesh, and not yet have
Found out the wisdom of the grave?
These, though the body they forget,
Speak with the body's voices yet
A mortal speech; but who of ye
Shall speak out of eternity?
Only Death knows, only Death can
Speak the whole truth of death to man.
O Death, Death kind and piteous,
Have pity, and tell the truth to us!

DEATH [*rising*]
Shall the seven bells of folly know
Pity, that lead me where I go?
[*She throws down the staff of bells.*
Have pity, all ye that draw breath,
O men, have pity upon Death.
The bells that weigh about my brows,
And ring all flesh into my house,
Are a fool's witless bells;
[*She throws down the cap of bells.*
I lead
The dance of fools, a fool indeed;
And my hands gather where they find,
For I am Death, and I am blind.
[*She takes off the mask and falls on her knees.*

1903.

MEDITATIONS

HYMN TO ENERGY

God is ; and because life omnipotent
Gives birth to life, or of itself must die,
The suicide of its own energy,
God, of His unconsuming element,
Remakes the world, and patiently renews
Sap in the grass and ardour in the wind,
Morning and evening dews,
And tireless light and the untiring mind.

God makes things evil and things good ; He makes
Evil as good, with an unchoosing care,
Nor sets a brighter jewel in the air
Than on the broidered liveries of His snakes.
Man, make thy world thine own creation ; strive,
Colour thy sky, and the earth under thee,
Because thou art alive ;
Be glad, for thou hast nothing but to be.

Let every man be artist of his days,
And carve into his life his own caprice ;
And, as the supreme Artist does not cease
Labouring always in his starry ways,
Work without pause, gladly, and ask no man
If this be right or wrong ; man has to do
One thing, the thing he can :
Work without fear, and to thyself be true.

Hymn to Energy

Thou art, as God is ; and as God outflows,
Weaving His essence into forms of life,
And, out of some perfection's lovely strife,
Marries the rose's odour with the rose,
So must thou of thy heavenly human state,
And of thy formless strife and suffering,
Thyself thyself create
Into the image of a perfect thing.

August 21, 1902.

GIORGIONE AT CASTELFRANCO

I WENT to seek a many-coloured soul,
But here all colours burn into one white
And are invisible as light;
I sought the parts, and I have found the whole
In this calm, secretless,
Passionate, meditative, and austere
Refusal of perfection to appear
More like perfection, clothed in some excess.

November 19, 1903.

WASTED BEAUTY

This beauty is vain, this, born to be wasted,
Poured on the ground like water, spilled, and by no man tasted;
This, born to be loved, unloved shall remain
Till in white dust the lovely bones whiten again;
Till, dust in white dust, this high heart shall be still,
It shall desire and its labour be lost, it shall not have its will;
You, armies had met, once, if you turned your head:
Shall there be nothing changed? nothing, when you are dead.

Bognor, *July* 6, 1903.

UNSTABLE PRIDE

Because her body is a tender thing,
Like powdered butterflies, that must remain
Prideless, if any hand have brushed their wing ;
Or looking-glass that any breath may stain ;
Or flower that being rudely handled shrinks ;
Or warm wax, that takes print from any seal ;
Is it indeed for this that woman thinks
To have the power of man under her heel ?
Yet why should his true glory be obscured
For such a poor proud fond fragility,
Or her possession be with pride endured
Because, possessed, she lacks security ?
Why should she be honoured of men because
She is dishonoured by so easy flaws ?

January 18, 1904.

TIME AND BEAUTY

Your hair, that burning gold
Naked might not behold,
Shall tarnish, and your skin
Wrinkle its satin in,
And your lips, like a rose,
Uncolour and unclose;
Yet, because you are made
Of beauty, not arrayed
In beauty's covering,
Hold Time for a vain thing.
Time shall bid youth let fall
Its colours one and all,
And wither in chill air
Bright blood and burning hair;
When these are overpast,
The bones of beauty last.

November 10, 1905.

TIME AND MEMORY

Shall I be wroth with Time, that has no stay,
And even dreams brings to a mortal end,
Because my soul to mortal things would lend
Her restless immortality away?

I have seen love, that was so quick a flame,
Go out in ashes; I have seen desire
Go out in smoke, that was so bright a fire;
And both become no better than a name.

I will be lessoned by the years that bring
For hearts forgetfulness, for thought relief;
What bud in spring remembers the last leaf
Winter would not let go for all the spring?

November 13, 1905.

THE PASSING

Weep not at all : crocuses in the grass,
Like little flames of gold, flicker and pass ;
The buds that after winter soothe the trees
Have longer days, but pass even as these ;
And the rejoicing and all-quickening spring
Is but, in sleep, a brief awakening.
How little earth is wide and deep enough
To cover this that, while it lived, did love
Her lover no whit less than Mary did
Her son ; in what a shallow pit is hid
Beauty that, while it lived, did overpower
Strong men, and now is fallen like a flower.
This, which they leave alone under the sky,
Naked, for rains to wash and suns to dry,
Veiled her soft flesh against the rain and sun :
So fadeth every flower and every one.

March 14, 1905.

ROMAN MEDITATION

Learn wisdom, this is wisdom, cry
The teachers ; and the teachers die.
What should it profit me were mine
The wisdom of the Antonine,
Or Plato's ? What is it to me
If that be wisdom or this be ?
I know the same unfaded world,
A pebble from the brook, is hurled
Forth from Time's sling through endless ways,
And I shall have no part or place
Save in the pebble's senseless speed.
Wherein shall wisdom to my need
Minister ? how shall wisdom save
From the last folly of the grave ?

April 23, 1905.

INDIAN MEDITATION

WHERE shall this self at last find happiness ?
O Soul, only in nothingness.
Does not the Earth suffice to its own needs ?
And what am I but one of the Earth's weeds ?
All things have been and all things shall go on
Before me and when I am gone ;
This self that cries out for eternity
Is what shall pass in me :
The tree remains, the leaf falls from the tree.
I would be as the leaf, I would be lost
In the identity and death of frost,
Rather than draw the sap of the tree's strength
And for the tree's sake be cast off at length.
To be is homage unto being : cease
To be, and be at peace,
If it be peace for self to have forgot
Even that it is not.

December 26, 1905.

NIGHT

The night's held breath,
And the ſtars' ſteady eyes :
Is it sleep, is it death,
In the earth, in the skies ?

In my heart of hope,
In my reſtless will,
There is that should not ſtop
Though the earth ſtood ſtill,

Though the heavens shook aghaſt,
As the froſt shakes a tree,
And a ſtrong wind caſt
The ſtars in the sea.

Fordingbridge, *Auguſt* 25, 1905.

AMENDS TO NATURE

I HAVE loved colours, and not flowers ;
Their motion, not the swallow's wings ;
And wasted more than half my hours
Without the comradeship of things.

How is it, now, that I can see,
With love and wonder and delight,
The children of the hedge and tree,
The little lords of day and night ?

How is it that I see the roads,
No longer with usurping eyes,
A twilight meeting-place for toads,
A midday mart for butterflies ?

I feel, in every midge that hums,
Life, fugitive and infinite,
And suddenly the world becomes
A part of me and I of it.

POLTESCOE, *July* 24, 1909.

SONGS OF POLTESCOE VALLEY

I

Under the trees in the dell,
Here by the side of the stream,
Were it not pleasant to dream,
Were it not better to dwell?

Here is the blue of the sea,
Here is the green of the land,
Valley and meadow and sand,
Seabird and cricket and bee;

Cows in a field on the hill,
Farmyards a-fluster with pigs.
Blossoming birds on the twigs;
Cool, the old croon of the mill.

II

All day I watch the sun and rain
That come and go and come again,
The doubtful twilights, and, at dawn
And sunset, curtains half withdrawn
From open windows of the sky.
The birds sing and the seagulls cry
All day in many tongues; the bees
Hum in and out under the trees
Where the capped foxglove on his stem
Shakes all his bells and nods to them.

All day under the rain and sun
The hours go over one by one,
Brimmed up with delicate events
Of moth-flights and the birth of scents
And evening deaths of butterflies.
And I, withdrawn into my eyes
From the strict tedious world within,
Each day with joyous haste begin
To live a new day through, and then
Sleep, and then live it through again.

III

The woodpecker laughed as he sat on the bough,
This morning,
To give fair warning,
And the rain's in the valley now.

Look now and listen: I hear the noise
Of the thunder,
And deep down under
The sea's voice answer its voice.

All the leaves of the valley are glad,
And the birds too,
If they had words to,
Would tell of the joy they had.

Only you at the window, with rueful lips
Half pouting,
Stand dumb and doubting,
And drum with your finger-tips.

IV

When the bats begin to flit
And the cottage lamp is lit,
When the nightjar in his throat
Trills his soft and woody note,
Then the hour has come to nook
In a corner with a book :
Keats or Campion shall it be ?
Nothing if not poetry.

Bee-like shall I seek for sweets
In the honeyed hedge of Keats ?
Or with Campion on the wing
Flutter, poise, and perch, and sing ?
Happy nightly to be found
With " blithe shades of underground,"
Or for a night-time to put on
The bright woes of Hyperion.

V

To live and die under a roof
Drives the brood of thoughts aloof ;
To walk by night under the sky
Lets the birds of thought fly ;
Thoughts that may not fly abroad
Rot like lilies in the road ;
But the thoughts that fly too far
May singe their wings against a star.

VI

Leaves and grasses and the rill
That babbles by the water-mill ;
Bramble, fern, and bulrushes,
Honeysuckle and honey-bees ;
Summer rain and summer sun
By turns before the day is done ;
Rainy laughter, twilight whirr,
The nighthawk and the woodpecker ;
These and such as these delights
Attend upon our days and nights,
With the honey-heavy air,
Thatched slumber, cream, and country fare.

VII

Gold and blue of a sunset sky,
Bees that buzz with a sleepy tune,
A lowing cow and a cricket's cry,
Swallows flying across the moon.

Swallows flying across the moon,
The trees darken, the fields grow white ;
Day is over, and night comes soon :
The wings are all gone into the night.

September 1904.

TO A SEA-GULL

Bird of the fierce delight,
Brother of foam as white
And winged as foam is,
Wheeling again from flight
To some unfooted height
Where your blithe home is ;

Bird of the wind and spray,
Crying by night and day
Sorrowful laughter,
How shall man's thought survey
Your will or your wings' way,
Or follow after ?

What pride is man's, and why,
Angel of air, should I
Joy to be human ?
You walk and swim and fly,
Laugh like a man and cry
Like any woman.

I would your spirit were mine
When your wings dip and shine
Smoothly advancing ;
I drink a breathless wine
Of speed in your divine
Aerial dancing.

Poltescoe, *August* 18, 1904.

CORNISH WIND

THERE is a wind in Cornwall that I know
From any other wind, because it smells
Of the warm honey breath of heather-bells
And of the sea's salt; and these meet and flow
With such sweet savour in such sharpness met
That the astonished sense in ecstasy
Tastes the ripe earth and the unvintaged sea.
Wind out of Cornwall, wind, if I forget:
Not in the tunnelled streets where scarce men breathe
The air they live by, but wherever seas
Blossom in foam, wherever merchant bees
Volubly traffic upon any heath:
If I forget, shame me! or if I find
A wind in England like my Cornish wind.

May 8, 1906.

BY LOE POOL

The pool glitters, the fishes leap in the sun
With joyous fins, and dive in the pool again ;
I see the corn in sheaves, and the harvestmen,
And the cows coming down to the water one by one.
Dragon-flies mailed in lapis and malachite
Flash through the bending reeds and blaze on the pool ;
Sea-ward, where trees cluster, the shadow is cool ;
I hear a sighing, where the sea is, out of sight ;
It is noontide, and the fishes leap in the pool.

August 13, 1903.

HARVEST MOON

Thoughtful luminous harvest moon, as I walk,
The rich and sumptuous night, the procession of trees
Under the moon ; the stream's babbling talk ;
One star on the eastern ridge hung low on the sea's
Border unseen ; a rose-grey shade in the west,
Faded, a petal of sunset, and absolute rose ;
Crickets chirp, the sounds of day are at rest ;
Under the harvest moon, one by one goes
The austere procession of trees, that walk as I walk.

August 19, 1904.

VILLA BORGHESE

A GRACE of winter breathing like the spring ;
Solitude, silence, the thin whispering
Of water in the fountains, that all day
Talk with the leaves ; the winds, gentle as they,
Rustle the silken garments of their speech
Rarely, for they keep silence, each by each,
The dim green silence of the dreaming trees,
Cypress and pine and the cloaked ilexes,
That winter never chills ; and all these keep
A sweet and grave and unawakening sleep,
Reticent of its dreams, but hearing all
The babble of the fountains as they fall,
Chattering bright and irresponsible words
As in a baby-speech of liquid birds.

ROME, *January* 26, 1904.

STRATFORD-ON-AVON

Bright leaves and the pale grass turn grey ;
Now, sudden as a thought, one swan
Moves on the water and is gone ;
The broad and liberal flood of day
Ebbs to thin twilight, and night soon
Out of the wells of dark fills up
The valley like a brimming cup
With silver waters of the moon.

This is the ardent hour of peace ;
The Avon like a mirror lies
Under the pale November skies ;
The shaken moon and the still trees
Trouble the water not a whit,
And, secret as a hidden word,
One note is spoken by one bird
As if the water answered it.

November 19, 1904.

FELPHAM

"Away to sweet Felpham, for heaven is there."—BLAKE.

HERE Blake saw the seventy-seven
Stairs, and golden gates of heaven;
He said, "Come, for heaven is there";
He saw heaven where I see air,
He saw angels where I see
Only divine earth and sea.
"Bread of thought, wine of delight,"
Fed his spirit day and night,
But what heavenly bread or wine
Shall in these late days feed mine?
What strong lust of mortal eyes
Shuts me out of Paradise?
I can see, and 'tis enough
For my appetite of love,
Waters yellow, rose, and green,
Like the meadow-colours seen
In an opal absinthine
To the sea's pale level line;
Lavender and yellow sand,
With painted pebbles near the land;
Moss-grown groins all over-hung
With brown-leaved wreaths of seaweed, flung
By the sea to cover them;
Bright wet sea-pools that begem
The duller sand; and then green grass
Brighter than clear crysopras;

Tufted tamarisk that is
Ruddier than burnt topazes ;
And, against the sky in rows,
Branches black with nests and crows,
To whose shelter homeward fly
Wings out of the twilight sky,
And there softly put to rest
Tired day into its nest.

BOGNOR, *July* 13, 1903.

THE GARDENER

The gardener in his old brown hands
Turns over the brown earth,
As if he loves and understands
The flowers before their birth,
The fragile childish little strands
He buries in the earth.

Like pious children one by one
He sets them head by head,
And draws the clothes when all is done,
Closely about each head,
And leaves his children to sleep on
In the one quiet bed.

Guildford, *August* 25, 1900.

SEA TWILIGHT

The sea, a pale blue crystal cup,
With pale water was brimmed up ;
And there was seen, on either hand,
Liquid sky and shadowy sand.

The loud and bright and burning day,
Charred to ashes, ebbed away ;
The listening twilight only heard
Water whispering one word.

Bognor, *July* 9, 1903.

TWILIGHT SONG

Warder of silence, keep
Watch on the ways of sleep ;
Twilight, bringer of night,
End the day with delight.
Out of branch, out of bush,
What winds waken and hush ?
Out of hedge, out of grass,
Murmurs rustle and pass.
See, on tottering feet,
Lambs that sleepily bleat ;
Hark, from fields where they browse,
Complaining voices of cows ;
Challenging night, rings out
The cuckoo's confident shout ;
But the wailing peewit
Calls the night home to it.

Wittersham, *May* 18, 1906.

ROME

A HIGH and naked square, a lonely palm ;
Columns thrown down, a high and lonely tower ;
The tawny river, ominously fouled ;
Cypresses in a garden, old with calm ;
Two monks who pass in white, sandalled and cowled ;
Empires of glory in a narrow hour
From sunset into starlight when the sky
Wakened to death behind St. Peter's dome :
That, in an eyelid's lifting, you and I
Will see whenever any man says " Rome."

ROME, *February* 18, 1904.

LONDON

The sun, a fiery orange in the air,
Thins and discolours to a disc of tin,
Until the breathing mist's mouth sucks it in ;
And now there is no colour anywhere,
Only the ghost of greyness ; vapour fills
The hollows of the streets, and seems to shroud
Gulfs where a noise of multitude is loud
As unseen water falling among hills.
Now the light withers, stricken at the root,
And, in the evil glimpses of the light,
Men as trees walking loom through lanes of night
Hung from the globes of some unnatural fruit.
To live, and to die daily, deaths like these,
Is it to live, while there are winds and seas ?

December 6, 1904.

AUTUMN

There is so little wind at all,
The last leaves cling, and do not fall
From the bare branches' ends ; I sit
Under a tree and gaze at it,
A slender web against the sky,
Where a small grey cloud goes by ;
I feel a speechless happiness
Creep to me out of quietness.

What is it in the earth, the air,
The smell of autumn, or the rare
And half reluctant harmonies
The mist weaves out of silken skies,
What is it shuts my brain and brings
These sleepy dim awakenings,
Till I and all things seem to be
Kin and companion to a tree ?

October 21, 1904.

WINTER IN SPRING

Winter is over, and the ache of the year
Quieted into rest;
The torn boughs heal, and the time of the leaf is near,
And the time of the nest.

The poor man shivers less by his little hearth,
He will warm his hands in the sun;
He thinks there may be friendliness in the earth
Now the winter is done.

Winter is over, I see the gentle and strange
And irresistible spring:
Where is it I carry winter, that I feel no change
In anything?

January 3, 1905.

NIGHT IN THE VALLEY

Waves of the gentle waters of the healing night,
Flow over me with silent peace and golden dark,
Wash me of sound, wash me of colour, drown the day ;
Light the tall golden candles and put out the day.

Smells of the valley gather round me with the night :
Honey is in the wind and salt is in the wind,
Like a drugged cup with hot sweet scents of sleepy herbs
And sharp with fiery breaths of coolness in the cup,
Wind of the sea, wind of the valley, drunken wind.

Out of the valley, voices ; hark, beyond the hedge
A long deep sigh, the human sighing of a beast ;
Under the eaves the last low twitter in the thatch ;
Across the valley, harsh and sweet, the patient whirr
Of the untiring bird that tells the hours of night.

Else, silence in the valley while the night goes by
Like quiet waters flowing over the loud day's
Brightness, the empty sea, and the vexed heart of man.

July 13, 1905.

WIND IN THE VALLEY

All the valley fills with wind
As a rock-pool with the tide;
And the tumult, clashed and dinned,
Floods like waters far and wide.

The torn mainsail of the rain,
By the clutching wind strained tight,
Flaps against the window-pane,
Creaking at the mast all night.

Hands of wind are at the doors,
Feet of wind upon the roof;
Wind with dragon voices roars
Blindly, trumpeting aloof.

Mouths of wind at all the cracks
Whistle through the walls; and, hark!
Lashes clang on leaping backs
Of the horses of the dark.

Poltescoe, *August* 4, 1905.

WIND AT NIGHT

The night was full of wind that ran
Like a strong blind distracted man
About the fields in the loud rain;
The night was full of the wind's pain.

I looked into the naked air,
Only the crying wind was there,
In wet invisible torment, tossed
About the darkness like a ghost.

My thought in me cried out and sought
Only, like wind, to fly from thought;
But like my thought the wind could find
Nowhere to hide out of the wind.

Wittersham, *November* 23, 1905.

THE CRYING OF THE EARTH

I HEAR the melancholy crying of birds in the night
Over the long brown wrinkled fields that lie
As far along as the ſtarless roots of the sky;
I hear them crying from the water out of sight,

A melancholy and insatiable and inexplicable noise,
A loud whimpering between two silences,
The silence of ſtarry life and this that is
The silence of Earth in pain of travail: O voice

Wandering bodiless, between sky and sod,
Angry and pitiful, a crying uncomforted,
Are you not the crying of the earth on her outraged bed,
Againſt Man, who has got her with child, to her Father God?

WITTERSHAM, *February* 10, 1906.

THE GUESTS

When I and my own heart are all alone
With one another and our neighbour thought,
We talk together, but the talk has grown
Sadder of late, and we have grown distraught.
The feasting-table as of old is spread,
And of the selfsame fare we drink and eat;
But listless fingers and a drooping head
Take all the savour out of princes' meat.
Then, as my neighbour thought and I sit down,
Looking on one another's eyes grown cold
And silent lips and joy-dispelling frown,
That were so joyous table-mates of old,
Each plots to call in guests, if guests there be
That would sit down between my thought and me.

October 17, 1904.

A TRIPTYCH

I. S. APOLLINARE IN CLASSE : RAVENNA

A TEMPLE by the wayside, a shut gate
Which no priest enters, going in to God ;
Within, carved marble columns rise in state,
Making a delicate and royal road
To the mosaic of the heavenly choir,
Where in the dome the stars about the cross
Break into golden and pale lunar fire,
And the six sheep from Bethlehem move across
To where six sheep come from Jerusalem,
Seeking their shepherd, Christ ; for these are Christ's
Apostles, sheep that love Him, and with them,
Not less than they, the four Evangelists.
Age has not dwindled nor rude time effaced
This splendour : S. Apollinare stands,
Exiled, a mighty temple in the waste.
Without, a grey mist and unhappy lands ;
Wide, flat, unending meadows of coarse grass ;
A pool, a thin straight line of fragile trees ;
A treeless moor, a shivering brown morass ;
Woods ruddy with the lovely bright disease
Of autumn dying into winter ; pines,
Their dark-green heads aloft into the air,
Crowding together, or in travelling lines ;
Jewelled and dim, marsh-waters everywhere.

January 30, 1903.

II. ISOTTA TO THE ROSE : RIMINI

The little country girl who plucks a rose
Goes barefoot through the sunlight to the sea,
And singing of Isotta as she goes.

When I am dead, men shall remember me
Under my marble roses in the tomb
Built like the Virgin's shrine in Rimini.

Why should my beauty last beyond the bloom
Of any summer rose? but I must live,
Old, and not knowing, in the narrow room.

My rose, I would be frail and fugitive,
As you are; but my lover and my king
Gives me the fatal gift he has to give.

Sigismund gives me, as a little thing,
His immortality; his will is mine,
For I am his, but I stand wondering.

The woman that I am to be divine,
The body that I have to stand in stone
As Michael, and be worshipped at his shrine!

But I, like my pale roses over-blown,
Would fade and fall, and be the dust in dust,
And nothing that I ever was be known.

A little while we have for life and lust :
My marble roses, pity me, and shed
Your petals carved to hold my name in trust,

And let me be forgotten, being dead !

RIMINI, *November* 28, 1903.

III. THE CAMPO SANTO: PISA

Death has a chapel here, and on the walls
You read his chronicle: how men who die
Are not at end after their funerals,

And how the busy loving worm sucks dry
The marrow of their bones, and other men
Sicken and stop their noses, riding by;

And how an angel wakens them, and then
The manner of their judgment, and the way
That leads to hell and the eternal pain.

Also there is a heaven, where minstrels play
And men and women under summer boughs
Talk with each other in a golden day.

Upon the walls men love and men carouse,
Men sleep and wake, and death comes when he will,
And gathers all into his equal house.

The mournful and memorial walls are chill:
All flesh is grass, they say, and withereth;
Yet (shall not all flesh live?) live grasses fill

These cloisters of this sanctuary of death.

Pisa, *March* 25, 1904.

GIOVANNI MALATESTA AT RIMINI

Giovanni Malatesta, the lame old man,
Walking one night, as he was used, being old,
Upon the grey seashore at Rimini,
And thinking dimly of those two whom love
Led to one death, and his less happy soul
For which Cain waited, heard a seagull scream
Twice, like Francesca ; for he ſtruck but twice.
At that, rage thruſt down pity ; for it seemed
As if those windy bodies with the sea's
Unfriended heart within them for a voice
Had turned to mock him ; and he called them friends,
And he had found a wild peace hearing them
Cry senseless cries, halloing to the wind.
He turned his back upon the sea ; he saw
The ragged teeth of the sharp Apennines
Shut on the sea ; his shadow in the moon
Ploughed up a furrow with an iron ſtaff
In the hard sand, and thruſt a long lean chin
Outward and downward, and thruſt out a foot,
And leaned to follow after. As he saw
His crooked knee go forward under him
And after it the long ſtraight iron ſtaff,
" The ſtaff," he thought, " is Paolo : like that ſtaff
And like that knee we walked between the sun
And her unmerciful eyes " ; and the old man,
Thinking of God, and how God ruled the world,
And gave to one man beauty for a snare
And a warped body to another man,

Not less than he in soul, not less than he
In hunger and capacity for joy,
Forget Francesca's evil and his wrong,
His anger, his revenge, that memory,
Wondering at man's forgiveness of the old
Divine injustice, wondering at himself:
Giovanni Malatesta judging God.

RIMINI, *November* 27, 1903.

OTHO AND POPPAEA: A DRAMATIC SCENE

OTHO

A word, Poppaea!

POPPAEA

I will speak with you
If you will speak for kindness; but your brows
Are sick and stormy: why do you frown on me?
I will not speak unless it is for love.

OTHO

Nothing but love, Poppaea; nothing less.

POPPAEA

Then sit by me and take my hand, and tell me
Why you are sick and stormy and unkind
For nothing less than love.

OTHO

If I should sit
So near you as to touch you; no, this once
I will not touch you, and this once I will
Speak to the end.

POPPAEA [*sitting down*]

Why, stand then, and so far,
And come no nearer, and by all the gods
Speak, and if you would have it to be the end,
You are the master here, not I.

OTHO

Alas,
I fear the end is over. Yet, if once,
As I thought once, you loved me, if you keep
So much remembrance as to have not forgot
How, when, how much, I loved you, tell me now
What you would have me do.

POPPAEA

You love me still ?

OTHO

Still.

POPPAEA

And no less than when you coveted
My husband's wife, and still no less than when
You heated Caesar, praising me ?

OTHO

No less ?
No more, Poppaea ?

POPPAEA

There was a time once,
You loved me lightly ; there was a time once,
You taught me to love lightly ; and a time
Before that time, if you had loved me then
I had not loved you lightly, Otho. Now
I have learned your lesson, and I ask of you
No more than what you taught me.

OTHO

Miserable,
And a blind fool, and deadly to myself,
I have undone my life ; it is I who ask
What you have taught me ; for I cannot live
Without that constant poison of your love
That you have drugged me with, and withered me
Into a craving fever. There is a death
More cruel in your arms than in the grave,
More exquisite than many tortures, more
An ecstasy than agony, more quick
With vital pangs than life is. If I must,
Bid me begone, and let me go and die.

POPPAEA

There is no man I would not rather know
Alive to love me. What have I done to you,
Otho, that you should cry against me thus ?

OTHO

I will ask Nero : you I will not ask.

POPPAEA

Otho, I hold your hand with both my hands,
Look in my face, and read there if I lie ;
But I will love you, Otho, if you will.

OTHO

I hold your hands, I look into your eyes,
There is no truth in them ; they laugh with pride
And to be mistress of the souls of men.

POPPAEA

I will not let you go unless you swear
That you believe me; tell me, is it true,
Nothing but truth, and do you really love
Nothing but me?

OTHO

There is not in the world
Anything kind or cruel, anything
Worth the remembering, else: but you are false,
False for a crown, and you are Cressida,
False for the sake of falseness.

POPPAEA [*rising*]

On my life,
I love you, and I will not let you go.
The crown makes not the Caesar; have I not found
More than a kingdom here? Take this poor kiss,
And this, and this, for tribute.

OTHO

Either the gods
Have sent some madness on me, or I live
For the first time in my life.

[NERO *enters quietly and comes up to* OTHO *and* POPPAEA.

NERO

My most dear friend,
Once, being with this woman who stands here
(Do you remember?), you, with her good leave,
Shut to the door upon me: I knocked then,

Hearing your voices merry with the trick,
And no man opened, and I went away.
I ask now of this woman, and not now
As Caesar, but your rival, Otho, still,
I bid her choose between us. Let her speak,
And you, my Otho, listen.

OTHO

If the truth
Live in your soul, speak now, Poppaea, now
The last time in the world.

NERO [*smiling*]

Poppaea ?

POPPAEA [*throwing herself into his arms*]

Need
Poppaea speak ? Nero knows all her heart.

NERO

Is this enough, Otho ?

OTHO

It is enough ;
Otho knows all her heart.

1903.

PROLOGUE FOR A MODERN PAINTER

To Augustus John

Hear the hymn of the body of man:
This is how the world began;
In these tangles of mighty flesh
The stuff of the earth is moulded afresh.

What struggles and cries in eyes and cheeks?
The stir of the sap that awakes and seeks
To give again the gift it receives
And burgeon into buds and leaves;

The sadness and the ardour of life,
Violent animal peace, the strife
Of woman's instinct and man's blood
With patterns of beauty and rules of good.

Here nature is, alive and untamed,
Unafraid and unashamed;
Here man knows woman with the greed
Of Adam's wonder, the primal need.

The spirit of life cries out and hymns
In all the muscles of these limbs;
And the holy spirit of appetite
Wakes the browsing body with morning light.

November 27, 1905.

FOR A PICTURE OF ROSSETTI

Smoke of battle lifts and lies
Sullen in her smouldering eyes,
Where are seen
Captive bales of merchandise.

Here are shudderings of spears,
Webs of ambush, nets of fears,
Here have been
Prisons, and a place of tears.

In her hair have souls been caught;
Here are snared the strength of thought,
Pride of craft,
Here desire has come to nought.

Have not her lips kissed again
Lips that kissed for love's sake, when
Her lips laughed
Like a passing-bell for men?

This is what Rossetti says
In the crisis of a face.

Bognor, *March* 31, 1905.

A PROFILE

A NYMPH in all her ardour towards the Faun,
Leant heavily, with open eyes alight,
And wet lips redder than an April dawn,
And panting hair, and bright cheeks burning white,
And white breast lifted on the stormy tide
That ebbs and flows through all her body, full
Of unaware desire, unfrightened pride,
And young joy making passion beautiful.

January 24, 1900.

EMILY BRONTË

This was a woman young and passionate,
Loving the Earth, and loving most to be
Where she might be alone with liberty;
Loving the beasts, who are compassionate;
The homeless moors, her home; the bright elate
Winds of the cold dawn; rock and stone and tree;
Night, bringing dreams out of eternity;
And memory of Death's unforgetting date.
She too was unforgetting; has she yet
Forgotten that long agony when her breath
Too fierce for living fanned the flame of death?
Earth for her heather, does she now forget
What pity knew not in her love from scorn,
And that it was an unjust thing to be born?

Bognor, *April* 15, 1906.

THE ROPE-MAKER

I WEAVE the strands of the grey rope,
I weave with sorrow, I weave with hope,
I weave in youth, love, and regret,
I weave life into the net.

When I was a child the care began,
And now my child shall be a man;
When I am old and my fingers shake,
There'll be nets to mend, and more nets to make.

And life's a weary and heavy thing,
And there's no rest in the evening;
And long or light though the labour be,
It's a life to the net, and nets to the sea.

April 2, 1903.

THE CHOPIN PLAYER

To Vladimir de Pachmann

The sounds torture me: I see them in my brain;
They spin a flickering web of living threads,
Like butterflies upon the garden beds,
Nets of bright sound. I follow them: in vain.
I must not brush the least dust from their wings:
They die of a touch; but I must capture them,
Or they will turn to a caressing flame,
And lick my soul up with their flutterings.

The sounds torture me: I count them with my eyes,
I feel them like a thirst between my lips;
Is it my body or my soul that cries
With little coloured mouths of sound, and drips
In these bright drops that turn to butterflies
Dying delicately at my finger-tips?

October 26, 1907.

THE SICK MAN TO HEALTH

I

The Eyes, that, having seen the saintly light
Blossom white-petalled out of a white sea
In a miraculous rose of breathing light,
See a patched harlot reel unsteadily,
From lamp to lamp dragging a yellow train ;
The Ears, that pant with anger and quick fear
At a beloved voice heard suddenly,
Or at a half-felt echo in the brain
Of music it had once been life to hear ;
The Nostrils, weary gates that open now
Upon a garden where the flowers are sick
And the dead fruit hangs rotting on the bough ;
The Mouth that now eats ashes and drinks dust,
And was so keen to savour and so quick
To sort its lust from any other's lust ;
The many hands that in the body move
To touch the world and pasture their delight
Where sacredly they did with things unite
In mutual acts of love ;
Cry to thee, with their little breath they cry.

II

The bones, that are the pillars, and the flesh
That is the gracious substance of the house,
And the smooth skin that spreads so fair and fresh
A covering for the walls, and all the beams

And rafters that as joints and sinews mesh
The body's framework, and the blood that streams
Like heaven's own light seen through a crimson rose
Through all the painted windows of the south;
Cry out of tarnished colour and strained wood
And out of joists unceiled and by the mouth
Of whistling panes, that let the salt winds through;
All these, that being evil have known good
And hunger backward for the good they knew,
Cry to thee with a long and shaken cry.

III

The Will, that ruled a city all its own,
And now, without sedition, like a King
Thrust quietly aside, is overthrown;
The Memory, that of any former thing
Could character the poise, the form, the size,
The impress of its shape upon the air,
And now, forgetting its blithe energies,
Lies drowsing in the sun, or, as it lies,
Repeats a fond arithmetic of sighs;
Identity, that wanders like the smoke,
Following a wind that stays not anywhere;
Conscience, that would not waken though God spoke;
Cry to thee with an unavailing cry.

IV

The Soul, that in the prison of its pride,
This house, this body, broken down with ills,
That to its sense is strongly edified,

Moated about, and guarded by a strong
And shining, mailed invulnerable throng,
Seeming so quiet-centred, but distils
The gentlest essence of mortality ;
The Soul, that in its scales of right and wrong,
Has weighed the justice that could make it live
And doom it, helpless, to eternity ;
The Soul, the one thing human that can give
Wings to the mortal longing to be free ;
The Soul, O Health, being sick and like to die,
Cries to thee with an unavailing cry.

January 7, 1903.

THE TURNING DERVISH

Stars in the heavens turn,
I worship like a star,
And in its footsteps learn
Where peace and wisdom are.

Man crawls as a worm crawls ;
Till dust with dust he lies,
A crooked line he scrawls
Between the earth and skies.

Yet God, having ordained
The course of star and sun,
No creature hath constrained
A meaner course to run.

I, by his lesson taught,
Imagining his design,
Have diligently wrought
Motion to be divine.

I turn until my sense,
Dizzied with waves of air,
Spins to a point intense,
And spires and centres there.

There, motionless in speed,
I drink that flaming peace,
Which in the heavens doth feed
The stars with bright increase.

Some spirit in me doth move
Through ways of light untrod,
Till, with excessive love,
I drown, and am in God.

November 6, 1902.

THE ARMENIAN DANCER

O SECRET and sharp sting
That ends and makes delight,
Come, my limbs call thee, smite
To music every string
Of my limbs quivering.

I strain, and follow on
After a joy in flight,
That flies, and is delight
Only when it is gone,
Not to be looked upon.

I strain, and would embrace
With ardours infinite
Some angel of delight
That turns his heavenly face
Ever into void space.

I dance, and as I dance
Desires as fires burn white
To fan the flame delight;
What vague desires advance
With covered countenance?

I dance, and shall not tire
Though music in my sight
Faint before my delight,
And song like a thin fire
Fail before my desire.

The sense within me turns
In labyrinths as of light,
Not dying into delight;
As a flame quickening burns,
Speed in my body yearns.

I stop, a quivering
Wraps me and folds me tight;
I shudder, and touch delight,
The secret and sharp sting,
Suddenly, a grave thing.

February 3, 1905.

THE ANDANTE OF SNAKES

They weave a slow andante as in sleep,
Scaled yellow, swampy black, plague-spotted white;
With blue and lidless eyes at watch they keep
A treachery of silence; infinite

Ancestral angers brood in these dull eyes
Where the long-lineaged venom of the snake
Meditates evil; woven intricacies
Of Oriental arabesque awake,

Unfold, expand, contract, and raise and sway
Swoln heart-shaped heads, flattened as by a heel,
Erect to suck the sunlight from the day,
And stealthily and gradually reveal

Dim cabalistic signs of spots and rings
Among their folds of faded tapestry;
Then these fat, foul, unbreathing, moving things
Droop back to stagnant immobility.

July 7, 1904.

SONG OF THE SIRENS

Our breasts are cold, salt are our kisses,
Your blood shall whiten in our sea-blisses ;
A man's desire is a flame of fire,
But chill as water is our desire,
Chill as water that sucks in
A drowning man's despairing chin
With a little kissing noise ;
And like the water's voice our voice.

Our hands are colder than your lovers',
Colder than pearls that the sea covers ;
Are a girl's hands as white as pearls ?
Take the hands of the sea-girls,
And come with us to the under-sands ;
We will hold in our cold hands
Flaming heart and burning head,
And put thought and love to bed.

We are the last desires ; we have waited,
Till, by all things mortal sated,
And by dreams deceived, the scorn
Of every foolish virgin morn,
You, awakening at last,
Drunken, beggared of the past,
In the last lust of despair
Tangle your souls into our hair.

October 20, 1904.

THE LOVERS OF THE WIND

Can any man be quiet in his soul
And love the wind? Men love the sea, the hills:
The bright sea drags them under, and the hills
Beckon them up into the deadly air;
They have sharp joys, and a sure end of them.
But he who loves the wind is like a man
Who loves a ghost, and by a loveliness
Ever unseen is haunted, and he sees
No dewdrop shaken from a blade of grass,
No handle lifted, yet she comes and goes,
And breathes beside him. And the man, because
Something, he knows, is nearer than his breath
To bodily life, and nearer to himself
Than his own soul, loves with exceeding fear.
And so is every man that loves the wind.
How shall a man be quiet in his soul
When a more restless spirit than a bird's
Cries to him, and his heart answers the cry?
Therefore have fear, all ye who love the wind.
There is no promise in the voice of the wind,
It is a seeking and a pleading voice
That wanders asking in an unknown tongue
Infinite unimaginable things.
Shall not the lovers of the wind become
Even as the wind is, gatherers of the dust,
Hunters of the impossible, like men
Who go by night into the woods with nets
To snare the shadow of the moon in pools?

Wittersham, *May* 23, 1906.

HYMN TO FIRE

Son of God and man,
When the world began,
First-born of love and hate,
Where was thy hid state?
Thou bliss by God denied,
Till the human pride
Snatched thee, and brought down
Heaven's breath for his own.

Spectre of the rose,
When thy red heart grows
Fierce, and thy delight
Makes a morn of night,
Do the stars grow pale,
Lest thy leapings scale
Heaven, and thou again
Harness them in thy train?

July 17, 1904.

VARIATIONS ON AN OLD TUNE

APOLOGY

Why is it that I sing no songs of you,
Now, as in those old days I used to do?
I have made many songs, and bitter songs,
Against you, I have done you many wrongs
In verse; and now, when you and I can sit
By the same fire, and looking into it
In silence, dream without unhappiness
Each his own dream in friendly loneliness,
I sing of you no longer. Still I find
Your shadow in all the corners of my mind,
And in my heart find you; but there, alas,
Though I search every cranny where it was,
My art I find not: it is well: my art
Knew only songs for an unquiet heart.

March 20, 1905.

ARAB LOVE-SONG

What matters it to me if the rain fall,
Since I must die of thirst? Her eyes are faint,
They faint with ardent sleep, faint into love:
Her eyes are promises she will not keep.
I ask no more; let others give me all,
While she is miser of her beauty: all
Is nothing, but her nothing is my all.
Have I not loved her when I knew not love?
Keep far from me that bitter knowledge; nay,
Why should I die? and if I know I die.
I have loved, and I have loved, perhaps, too much;
If to have loved as I have loved be sin,
I pray that God may never pardon it.

February 23, 1903.

SONG: AFTER HERRICK

Dear love, let's not put away
Love against a rainy day;
You are careful, and would hoard
Some of that which can't be stored;
For, like roses which are born
To die between a night and morn,
Being once plucked, being once worn,
So the rose of love's delight
Only lasts a day or night;
Though roses die, shall there not be
Next morn new roses on the tree?

March 27, 1905.

SONG

O WHY is it that a curl
Or the eyelash of a girl,
Or a ribbon from her hair,
Or a glove she used to wear,
Weighed with all a man has done,
With a thought or with a throne,
Drops the balance like a stone?

Antony was king of men,
Cleopatra was a queen,
And for Cleopatra he
Flings away his sovereignty.
Yet as well can Kate or Nan
Find, as Cleopatra can,
Antony in any man.

BOGNOR, *March* 27, 1905.

THE HEART'S TOYS

Hearts of mine, now youth is over,
Why be playing still at lover?
Comrade, there's no use protesting,
Love at forty is but jesting.
Though the same the eternal game is,
Love at twenty not the same is.
Hearts to play with there are plenty
When the heart's at one and twenty,
But if one and forty chooses,
Who consents and who refuses?
Heart of mine, lay down the playthings
As in childhood we would lay things
When our fancies had outgrown them,
And desert them and disown them.
Yet as children from their play-hours
Save and store for workaday hours
Doll or toy they used to care for,
Heart of mine, shall we not spare for
Days when scarcely we'll remember
Dancing April in December,
One heart's toy, as Meg and Moll do?
What if we should save one doll too?

Wittersham, *February* 6, 1906.

TWO LOVE-SONGS

I

I do not know if your eyes are green or grey
Or if there are other eyes brighter than they ;
They have looked in my eyes ; when they look in my eyes I can see
One thing, and a thing to be surely the death of me.

If I had been born a blind man without sight,
That sorrow would never have set this wrong thing right ;
When I touched your hand I would feel, and no need to see
The one same thing, and a thing the death of me.

Only when I am asleep I am easy in mind,
And my sleep is gone, and a thing I cannot find ;
I am wishing that I could sleep both day and night
In a bed where I should not toss from left to right.

March 23, 1903.

II

O woman of my love, I am walking with you on the sand,
And the moon's white on the sand and the foam's white in the sea;
And I am thinking my own thoughts, and your hand is on my hand,
And your heart thinks by my side, and it's not thinking of me.

O woman of my love, the world is narrow and wide,
And I wonder which is the lonelier of us two?
You are thinking of one who is near to your heart, and far from your side;
I am thinking my own thoughts, and they are all thoughts of you.

March 25, 1903.

GREY TWILIGHT

—Do you remember that long twilight? grey
Unending sand, a low grey sky, a wall
Of grey low cliffs, the sea against the sand
Flat, coloured like the sand, white at the edge,
And now and then a shouldering wave that rose
Long, black, like a ship's hull seen sideways. Grey
As the monotonous days of life, when each
Copies the day it follows, grey and still
In such a bleak repose, as if it slept
Tired out of hope, the sand lay endlessly.
We walked upon the sand, and heard the sea
Whimpering, in a little lonely voice,
And there was always sand and sea and sky,
Making a quietude of emptiness.
Do you remember?

—Such a quietude
As fire might drowse to, when its ashes burn.
It was the slumber of a violent life,
It filled me with the peace of energy.

—It filled me with the helplessness of things,
Intolerable days, intolerable hours,
The level, endless, dust-grey sand of things;
The sand slides back under our travelling feet,
Our feet labour, and there is still the sand
Infinitely before us, indefinitely
Behind us, the same sand and sea and sky.

—I was content : I saw no emptiness ;
The blood was busy in my veins ; I felt
All the young heat and colour of my blood
Fill up the hour with joy : a pause of life
Spoke to me in the greyness of the hour.
I can fill every hour with my own heat,
And colour all the hours of life with joy.

—You ; but I take my colour from the hour,
And all my hours of life are like this sand,
And I am tired of treading down the hours.

BACTON, *January* 11, 1902.

THE CAGED BIRD

A YEAR ago I asked you for your soul ;
I took it in my hands, it weighed as light
As any bird's wing, it was poised for flight,
It was a wandering thing without a goal.
I caged it, and I tended it ; it throve ;
Wise ways I taught it ; it forgot to fly ;
It learnt to know its cage, its keeper ; I,
Its keeper, taught it that the cage was love.
And now I take my bird out of the cage,
It flutters not a feather, looks at me
Sadly, without desire, without surprise ;
See, I have tamed it, it is still and sage,
It has not strength enough for liberty,
It does not even hate me with its eyes.

BACTON, *January* 19, 1902.

AN EPILOGUE TO LOVE

I

Love now, my heart, there is but now to love ;
Seek nothing more, but let it be enough
That one desire, one moment, melts in yours.
Hold the one moment fast ; nothing endures,
And, as the past was, shall the future be ;
O heart, hold fast the present. Then to me
My heart : What is the present ? There is none.
Has not the sigh after the kiss begun
The future ? and the past was in the kiss.
Then to my heart I said : O heart, if this
Be life, then what is love ? And my heart said :
Desire of things unborn or things long dead.

January 15, 1901.

II

I who have dreamed of happiness now dream
Of happiness no more. If the extreme
Desire of you leave over some poor space
To fold my pain into a happy place,
I am content ; if not, I am content.
Not for my peace, not for my pleasure sent,
Who have no rest nor any hope to bring,
O you, of whom I know not anything,

But that you hold me and I hold you not,
And that for you, in vain, I have forgot
The world: in vain: you are the world; I take
My foe into my keeping for your sake.
I who have dreamed of love now dream no more
Of love. It was a dream I dreamed before
I knew you. Now I know that when I fold
My arms about you in that hour I hold
A thing made wonderful with flesh and blood;
No more. I am content. It is not good
That men should dream by daylight: let them keep
Dreams for the kind forgetfulness of sleep.
Clip the soul's wings, hold down the heart, forget:
Yes, without dreams, I may be happy yet.

September 30, 1900.

III

Come into the dim forest of old sleep;
Wander with me, and I will lead you deep
Through paths of sun-warmed grasses and chill ferns,
Into the shadow where a green flame burns.
Hark! the swift rustle, wings among the leaves,
The curve of a dark sudden flight, that leaves
A quiver in the branches; dusky throats
Sob happily, a ripple of soft notes
Begins to soothe the silence back again.
But listen, for the tiny voice of rain
Whimpers among the pattering leaves; they cry
With easy, shining tears, the sun will dry

Off their sleek faces ; and the earth breathes in
The breath of rain, and nimble winds begin
To shake the hoarded odours of the wood
Out like a spendthrift ; and the air is good,
And kind, and sleepy. Cannot you and I
Forget to not be friends ? This is July.

July 1, 1904.

IV

I have loved life for other women's sake,
And now for your sake fear it. Can I slake
A thirst the whole world cannot satisfy ?
All that I have I give, but what am I ?
You have desired, you have desired in vain,
Such immortality of joy and pain
As mortal hours know nought of ; you have sought
The spirit of life in all things ; sense and thought
Strain after sharp delight, or drowse upon
The swift and sky-enfolding pinion
Of joy that flies in dreams between the stars.
You have loved knowledge, for that hand unbars
The gates of closed and waiting Edens ; praise,
For the delicious trouble in the gaze
Of the flushed praiser ; power, because power gives
Life to your life, telling you that it lives.
You have loved love, but not for love's sake, nay,
Loved to be loved ; I, loving you to-day,
Know that you love my love, not me ; I bring
A multitude of loves for offering,

All I have learnt in tears and ecstasies,
All my life loving : yet, shall this suffice ?
Life cries at all your senses, calling you
With many voices : how shall you be true
To your own self if you are true to me ?
You have loved love, you have loved liberty,
And not to love ; think, do you gain or lose
By choosing bondage ? love is bondage : choose !

August 19, 1900.

V

You speak to me as to an enemy,
And your warm eyes are cold only to me,
And your kind lips, that smile on all, grow stern
Only to me, and if by chance you turn
To where I sit and see you and are dumb,
A deep and friendless silence seems to come
Between us like a shadow, and you look
Into my face as into some old book.
Yet will a stillness deeper than delight,
The happy pain of joy grown infinite,
Knowing itself no more but as some pain
Too intimate for pleasure, softly rain
Into your soul like morning, if I take
Your hand in mine ; and suddenly you awake,
Out of a loneliness grown dear and strange,
And your deep quiet breathing seems to change,
Like the still water when it feels the wind ;
And, as earth thrills when night's last clouds are thinned,

A slow new wonder dawns into your face,
And little sighs breathe for a little space
Out of your breast like little smiles of sound,
Because, after the waiting, we have found
Each other; and if this be love, I know
No more than you; yet, if it be not so,
There is a good thing in the world, above
The best that I have ever dreamed of love.

September 30, 1900.

VI

I have not loved love, nor sought happiness,
I have loved every passionate distress,
And the adoration of sharp fear, and hate
For love's sake, and what agonies await
The unassuaged fulfilment of desire
Not eased in the having; I have sought to tire
The fretting of the flesh grown sad with thought,
And restless with remembering; I have sought
Forgetfulness, and rest, and liberty,
And bondage. And all these have come to me,
And all these I have suffered, and all these
Have brought no joy, and left me little ease.
Passionate and untender, I need words
Hard as bright jewels, bright and swift as birds,
If I but name you, miracle in flesh;
O cool, for the cool winds are not more fresh,
Blowing from the sea at twilight; flame of the deep
Roots of the earth, and sleepy with the sleep
Rustling in leafy trees and murmuring

In moonlight-shadowed woods when no birds sing ;
Young every day, forgetting by the way
Yesterday's memories with yesterday,
So making the world new again, and then
Forgetting, and so making it again.
Make a new world for me, or let me come
Into your world, and let it be a home
For my unrest, liberty from my dreams,
A place of winds and sunlight and cool streams
For my tired thought to drowse in. But no love,
No love ! Earth's loveliest paradise would prove
The Eden of the snake and that wise tree
Whose wisdom was our loss of liberty,
If love, a bitterer wisdom, spoilt the taste
Of every tree that God the gardener placed
About our path in the garden, saving one.
Make a new world for me ; I need the sun,
The sap of the earth, the deep breath of the wind,
The voices of the sea : these have not sinned,
Nor known mortality ; and these to you
Are of your blood : I would inherit too
That kingdom, liberal of its delight,
Unageing. I would love the day and night,
As you do ; I would love for its own sake
Beauty, no longer with the jealous ache
Of old desire, but freely as the air,
That breathes about all beauty everywhere.
Only, no love, not that sweet poison, brewed
From hemlock roots of kindness, that has strewed
The world with death, since, on Troy's " topless towers,"
Helen with deathless hands put back the hours.

I have not loved love ; let me be ; O give
Not love, but life : I would not love, but live !

February 26, 1901.

VII

Your eyes are empty streets where men have passed.
I search in vain : there is no shadow cast
Upon their silence ; yet a stealthy thing
Lurks in my heart watching and listening.
What do I seek ? what is there I should find ?
Only a little dust upon the wind,
Where many feet have trodden : let me give
Dreams to the night, and be content to live !
O, when you droop into my arms, and die
Into delight as into sleep, and lie
Enfolded deeper than a dream in sleep,
Smiling with little sleepy smiles, that creep
About the corners of your mouth, and stir
Your waking eyelids like a messenger,
Warm from the heart ; when I have seen your soul
Swoon to intense oblivion, and your whole
Body, forgotten of the soul, lie weak
And fluttering, and have feared to touch your cheek
Lest you should fade into a vaporous wreath ;
When I have seen the soul come back, and breathe
A mortal air, and with a wild surprise ;
Endured the awful questioning of eyes
Awakened out of hell or heaven, and bowed
My head in an exultant silence, loud
With triumphing voices out of hell or heaven ;

O my desire, I have beheld the seven
Heavens opened, and forgotten if time be ;
I have been drunken with an ecstasy
Older than time ; then, then that stealthy thing,
Coiled in my heart, begins awakening
The ignoble voices, and I listen : why ?
Why ? because you are you, and I am I.

November 27, 1900.

VIII

Why do I fear your past as if it stole
Some peace from the possession of my soul ?
Is not to-day enough ? No, not enough.
You love me : can I ask for more than love ?
Yes, more than love. What then ? The past. The past
Is dead, but we, who live, have met at last ;
I have forgotten all the rest ; forget,
And let our lives begin the day we met.
No : I remember. And if so ? I take
Your past with you, in silence, for your sake ;
Love as I love, take mine, be satisfied.
But you have loved ? I dreamed, and all dreams died.
I would know all. Why, then, this vanity
To count the dead and say, these died for me ?
No, not for me : they passed, they had their day,
Cried at your heart, were welcomed, went their way ;
Forgotten ? but their names, scrawled over, rest
Inscribed on your heart's liberal palimpsest ;
I read the names there still. So do not I ;
I read your eyes, that hate me, doubt me : why ?

An Epilogue to Love

Are not my arms around you, and my heart
Warm to your hand, and are we not apart,
Exiles of love, in a kind banishment?
Am I not yours, and am I not content?
I have given you all I have; can I unlive
My life, or is there more that I can give?
I take you: will you still not take me? still
You ask, refuse, withhold? Yes. As you will!

September 20, 1901.

A SONG AGAINST LOVE

There is a thing in the world that has been since the world began :
The hatred of man for woman, the hatred of woman for man.
When shall this thing be ended ? When love ends, hatred ends,
For love is a chain between foes and love is a sword between friends.
Shall there never be love without hatred ? Not since the world began,
Until man teach honour to woman, and woman teach pity to man.

O that a man might live his life for a little tide
Without this rage in his heart, and without this foe at his side !
He could eat and sleep and be merry and forget, he could live well enough,
Were it not for this thing that remembers and hates, and that hurts and is love.
But peace has not been in the world since love and the world began,
For the man remembers the woman, and the woman remembers the man.

May 11, 1903.

MARY IN BETHLEHEM: A NATIVITY

MARY. THE THREE SHEPHERDS.
JOSEPH. THE THREE KINGS.

The Scene represents the Stable in Bethlehem. MARY *has just awakened, and is bending over the manger where the Child lies asleep on the ground.*

MARY

Is it the morning? I am cold.
Look out and tell me if the moon
Has led the stars into their fold;
Then shut the door and make it fast.

[JOSEPH *rises, goes to the door, and looks out.*

JOSEPH

The night is blue, with stars of gold;
The middle watch of night is past;
See now, it will be morning soon!
Yet there is time enough for sleep.

[*He shuts the door, and stands near the manger.*

MARY

The child is sleeping, I have slept,
And in my dreams I think I wept;
I will not sleep again and weep.

JOSEPH

Tell me the dream.

MARY

I seemed to see
A mighty city, as it were
The city of Jerusalem ;
And all the folk ran to and fro,
Shouting, and in the midst of them
Three woeful figures, and the three
Bore each a cross he could not bear ;
And as I looked I seemed to know
The face of one of them, and then
Such bitter tears began to flow
That I awakened, and in fear
Felt for my child, and he was here,
And I was comforted again.

JOSEPH

O Mary, have no fear at all ;
God is our Father, and shall keep
Our feet, whether we wake or sleep.
Lie down again, and lay your head
Here, where the careful ox has fed
That stands in sleep beside his stall.

[*He lies down again and sleeps.*

MARY

Behold the handmaid of the Lord !
It was an angel, and I said
The words I feared to understand.

What was it when upon my bed
Suddenly the mild glory poured,
And in the glory was a voice
Bidding my soul greatly rejoice,
Because the Lord God was at hand?
O child of mine, marvellously
Born of the shadow of God, can this
Be for no great design of His
Who sits upon the flaming sun
And sets His feet upon the sea?
If I but knew what He decreed,
Before this body of mine was made
To be the mother of His Son,
Then were I satisfied indeed;
But now the angels come no more,
I wait and dream and am afraid.

[*There is a knocking at the door, and* JOSEPH *awakens.*

JOSEPH

There is a knocking at the door.

[*He opens the door: the* THREE SHEPHERDS *come in.*

FIRST SHEPHERD

Sir, if a newborn child be here
That in a manger lies,
We pray you that you let us near
To see him with our eyes.

JOSEPH

Good shepherds, it is early morn;
But come; his mother wakes; come in;

There was no housing in the inn;
Beside a manger he was born,
And there in swaddling clothes he lies.

SECOND SHEPHERD

O brother shepherds, we have found
The Saviour as they said;
Let us kneel down upon the ground
And pray about his bed.

[*The* SHEPHERDS *kneel.*

MARY

Shepherds, good shepherds, tell me why
You come about the break of day,
And kneel before my child, and pray
As if the stable where we lie
Were holy, or the Lord were nigh.

[*The* SHEPHERDS *rise.*

THIRD SHEPHERD

We shepherds watched our flocks by night,
And lo, an angel made
A glory of exceeding light,
And we were sore afraid.

Then said the angel: Shepherds all,
Fear not; I bring from heaven
Good tidings of great joy, which shall
Be to all people given.

For unto you is born this day
A Saviour, and His name
Is Christ the Lord: go ye your way
With haste to Bethlehem.

There, wrapped in swaddling clothes He lies,
A manger for His sleep.
There was a singing in the skies,
And we forgot our sheep.

MARY

O shepherds, kneel if ye will kneel;
I know not what these tidings be,
But my heart kneels, even as ye.
Then go your way, and may the peace
Of God be on us all.

[*The* SHEPHERDS *one after another bow before the Child, and go out.*

I feel
The wonder growing in my side.

JOSEPH

Mary, what tidings, then, are these,
That have but come to shepherd folk,
Poor men that know not anything?
Think you it was God's angel spoke?
Shall these find God out, if He hide
His will from Herod, who is King?

MARY

That which God wills He wills; if He
Have need of such a messenger,
Then would He send to us a King.

[*There is a knocking at the door and the* THREE KINGS *come in.*

GASPAR

Gate of light, window of the sky,
And mother of the dawn, I bring
A tribute of Arabian myrrh
Out of the fragrant East, where I
Talk with the stars, and am a King.

[*He gives myrrh.*

MELCHIOR

Garden of spices, lily of fire,
Flame of sweet smoke, I am a King,
And for your heavenly child I bring
The East's whole odours that enfold
The earth for a burnt offering.

[*He gives frankincense.*

BALTHASAR

I am a King, and African;
I bring, out of the dark earth, gold,
Which is the light of my desire.
Our gold and myrrh and frankincense
Take, Mother of the King of Man.

[*He gives gold.*

JOSEPH

My lords, we are but humble men.

MARY

O Kings, I am your handmaiden.
Have ye met shepherds going hence
Into the valley to their fold?

GASPAR

The angel shepherd of a star
While we in paths of heaven trod
Called to us in the East afar
And led our feet to Bethlehem :
The shepherd of the flock of God.

MARY

Have the stars speech, that they can bring
Your feet to this poor manger-bed ?

MELCHIOR

The stars are wise : we talk with them ;
A star spoke out of heaven, and said :
" Follow, and I will bring you where
A King, who is the King of Kings,
Has built His throne " ; His throne we see.

MARY

Where is this throne ? and where is He ?

BALTHASAR

This is the King of Kings, He lies
Within a lowly manger-bed,
Whose name was written in the skies ;
Bow down before the King of Kings,
For we have seen the face of Him
Before whose face the burning eyes
Of the flame-hearted stars grow dim,
Veiling with unastonished wings
Their faces from the face of Him
Whose name was written in the skies.

[*The* THREE KINGS *kneel before the Child, and go out.*

JOSEPH

Mary, the child shall be a king.

[*He goes aside.*

MARY

Blessed among all women, yea,
I have been chosen for this thing.
Now I have waited long enough,
I do not hope nor am afraid,
I do not look upon the way,
I have been chosen by God's love.
Now is this body, that was made
Of sinful and of mortal clay,
In the warm love of God arrayed,
And I am His, and He is mine ;
And now I know that I have known
God, all of God, and God alone,
And that the Son of God must be
As God is, human yet divine,
God in the Godhead, man in me.
O, when I hold my little child
Against my heart and stoop to see
If He has waked from sleep and smiled,
I carry an immortal load ;
My child, no less my child to me
Because I know my child is God.

December 12–13, 1902.

LOVE'S CRUELTY

LOVE'S CRUELTY

Beauty of woman, savour of her kiss,
The mystery of love that turns to be
The bite of an eternal cruelty,
O secret, silent creature, what is this,
One memory of so many memories,
That holds me and enfolds me, heart and brain,
If I but see in memory again
The infinite enigma of your eyes?

January, 1895.

BODY'S BLOOD

And if I love you more than my own soul
Then must you die—and I shall never die
Until I reach you, who have loved you so
That life and death are little more than dreams
And night-vigils and visitings from God.
You loved me, lied to me, left me. What's a bride
That ought to have been brideless ? For you were
A girl that never should have married ; one
So much more wonderful than I imagined
Anyone could be ; made of no virgin soil,
But veritable virgin when I met you,
Before I made you woman. And that's over,
As all such things have always been and shall be
In this world and the next. You know I might
Just chance to meet you, at some street-corner
Under the glaring lights, in Leicester Square,
Where you and I came out of the Empire. There
How well we know the stage-door, you and I,
And how you changed your houses ; Howland Street,
Where Paul Verlaine and Arthur Rimbaud lived
Some storm-tossed years of intense passion and pain
And love and hatred. There I hated you
And there I loved you. If Verlaine had met you
What songs he would have written ! Not like mine,
That were my veritable blood, my naked self,
My body and my soul. All these I laid

Body's Blood

One after another before you, and you trod
With delicate feet that never could have hurt me,
As birds might, on my body and on my soul,
And on my body's blood. God's cruel, dear:
And have I not been crueller than God?

October 3, 1919.

FACES

The pathos of a face behind the glass,
When April brightens in the grass ;
The pathos of a face that, like the day,
Fades to an evening, chill and grey,
Yet has not known the universal boon
Of Springtide at the warmth of noon.

The pathos of an innocent fresh face
Seen in a lust-polluted place ;
One of God's flowers among the painted flowers
That bear our image, being ours ;
The face of God's own angel, looking in,
Yet without judgment, on our sin.

April 3, 4, 1892.

AN INVOCATION

Give me your kisses : save me from her tears !
It is the weary sound of them one hears,
Sleeping and waking, an eternal rain,
That will not ever know itself in vain.
Her virtues leave me homeless in the cold,
I shiver on the hearthstone, and grow old,
While afar off young Life goes rioting
(As I would) down the sunny slopes of Spring.
But I must listen to her tears, her prayers,
The daily items of her daily cares :
She is a model woman, and my wife.
You, who can save me, give me back my life !
Come to me with your lips of rosy fire,
My bright delight, and my whole soul's desire ;
Come to me with your tingling hair aflame,
And save me from this sanctity of shame.
Give me your kisses ; for her lips are white :
They chill me ; but your lips are my delight.
The subtlety of love is in them, curled
Voluptuously to embrace the world.
Are not your eyes watch-fires, and are they not
Beacons of wreckage over seas forgot,
Seas that are safety to me, whose white foam
Lures me and leads me, perilously, home ?
Give me your kisses ; she is weeping now,
The model woman of the marriage-vow,
Whose lips are sterile to me, and can say
No more than some starved speech of " yea " and " nay " :

She is a model woman, and my wife.
I die of her; but you, O you are life!
Enfold me with your ardency of flame,
And be annihilation, in love's name.

May, 1895.

ALVISI CONTARINI

Alvisi Contarini slaying Christ
Swore in his beard: "I am a melon sliced."
Venice his vision seized. A shadow fell
As if from the up-hoisted abyss of hell
On the dead waters of the dead lagoon.
A lighted lantern covered up the Moon,
And round the lantern in a circle spun
The idlest wheels that ever turned the sun.
Beside Alvisi's side a woman stood,
Masked, and her cloak seemed dabbled as with blood,
And in her eyes an Oriental heat;
Hardly she stopped the dancing of her feet;
But when she laid her hand on him he turned
As if the sword within his scabbard burned.
On his left side a dainty minion stept,
A man's woman, a thing such always kept—
A thing I say and nothing but a thing—
For revels, when not closeted with the king.
He was love's own choice, with his painted skin
And subtle lips that sucked some secret in
And in the burning pallor of his cheeks
Trembled each ardent nerve that ever seeks
For what it longs for, what it never finds.
Two spirits these, imaginative minds
That change imaginations: she, Sin's bride,
And she the Spirit of the stagnant tide
The wild winds stir in Venice. Waves her fan

The masked girl and the man—I mean the man—
Needs never a choice. Each takes his arm ; one goes
This way or that, knowing that if dawn rose
One of the three, before dawn leaves her bed,
By Christ's or Satan's mercy, must be dead.

May, 1918.

AUBREY BEARDSLEY

Why was it he and not another?
Tell me, do you now enjoy this
As he did? That God should destroy this
That praised him in the passion of desiring
All, he created out of beauty:
God, who delights in requiring
Surely delight above duty:
That God should crush him and not another!
It was so little that he wanted:
The world's and the stars between them;
The eyes of the angels have not seen them;
Or this poor inch of the pavement,
Where you and I walk without knowing
What life meant, and so what the grave meant,
To him in his coming and going:
It was only life that he wanted!

March 24, 1898.

STUDIES IN STRANGE SINS

(After Beardsley's Designs)

I. THE WOMAN IN THE MOON

A NAKED youth adores the mocking Sun,
With a woman's sidelong eyes and lips,
Before unto the stormless Sea he dips.
The dark girl has the weariness of one
Who, after being satiated, is not won;
He, with some fever in his finger-tips,
Urges the fever in the girl who strips
Her body naked. Sinister, alone,
The dishevelled seaweed shifts under their feet;
Upon the margin of the moonless sea
What shall the end be of their agony?
He to Salome: "It is the moon we see,
And not the Sun. O moon's maiden, O cheat,
The globe of the Earth, fruit from a fruitless Tree!"

II. DESIGN FOR THE LIST OF PICTURES

Priapus, with his god's virility,
With woman's breasts that passionately rise,
His eyes convulsed with sinister irony,
His mouth that laughs, sinister as his eyes ;
Hair wild and wanton, tipped with the ivory
Of the moon's crescent out of sunless skies ;
Garlands of leaves and roses furiously
Around his body in disorder twine ;
The candlesticks emit a shaken flame ;
A mad boy kneels, a Cupid, with peacock wings,
Laughs like Priapus ; a monstrous Thing, malign,
Glides in the air. Which is it shakes with shame ?
Catullus to his infamous Lesbia sings.

III. SALOME'S LAMENT

Why did I have thee slain? Herodias' desire,
John; yea, I loved thee! They made me at the feast
Dance, and the dance set all my limbs on fire,
As, naked in the fashion of a beast,
I being girdled with all my precious stones
Around my thighs and here between my breasts,
Glittering with the untold glory of my zones,
Painted and perfumed, heedless of the guests,
The dance being done, I sat beside the King;
I saw the Heavens above, the Hells that lift
Their heads; so, Herod at me wondering,
Said, "Salome, ask of me what thou wilt, thy gift,
My gift, shall be thine own." And so I went
To Herodias in her chamber flushed with wine,
And she embraced me, passionate of my scent;
And said: "The head of John the Baptist, thine,
If thou but ask of Herod!" And I returned
And sat beside him and said: "I charge thee, King,
Thou givest me——" The heart within me burned,
My passionate heart, thinking of no such thing
As what Death is and life; I forgot my words,
Knowing that something said: "Yea, John must die!"

And as I heard the wind-blown songs of birds,
I said: "The head of John; yea, by and by,
On something golden." So, for his oath's sake,
Me he dared not reject. How my heart beat,

How my heart beat, O John! Some words he spake
To the Executioner, who went. Ah, the intense heat
That swooned around me: Moons! They gave me wine;
There was an universal hush of all men's breath:
What hour was it? I think it sounded nine.
The Headsman brought thine head that reeked of Death.

IV. JOHN AND SALOME

Black-haired and garbed in long black garments, John
With hand revulsed and eyes that ache with hate,
Equal in height with her, a dagger-thrust
Between them divides from him her raging lust,
Lust in her naked breasts that have two eyes,
Lust in her flesh, the flesh he looks upon,
Lust that makes her whole body undulate,
Lust on her lips ; the lust that never dies,
Between the hollow of her breasts, a sign
Sinister of that hell that lives within
Her limbs that long for him ; her mouth like wine,
Wine, that she gives to spirits more malign
Than hers. O the seven devils that make her sin
The one great Sin that never is forgiven
Between the heaven that's hell, the hell that's heaven !
Virginless Virgin and a virile man,
What is there common betwixt you in the world ?
His curses fell on her : there's not a span
Between his life and death ; the gates of the Tomb
Are flung wide open and a serpent's curled
Around the Virgin of the aching Womb !

V. ENTER HERODIAS

A Vampire, not a Woman, a Thing obscene,
Eyes hideous as the eyes of a hired Whore,
She, Herod's Wife, enters upon the scene.
Beside her stands a tall and sexless thing,
With the fig-leaf that has of fig-leaves four,
Always her sexless sex remembering,
A mask she wears ; naked enough, for once,
She has her Exit through the open door.
There's a wise owl ; a wise man that's a dunce
Reads in a book *Salome*. Let that pass.
As for this creature that's Herodias,
Nero's Agrippina she might have been.
" Make the way for the Tetrarch Antipas ! "
Cries Herod, before he enters on the scene.

VI. THE EYES OF HEROD

The eyes of Herod look not upon Her,
The painted angel of some delicate Lust
Who treads on snake-like lives as if they were dust ;
There's not a Serpent that is eviller.
Her eyes have in them more than Satan's pride ;
A little mouth that loves and hates and lies :
What Cross between the hollows of her Eyes
Brings back the Image of the Crucified ?

VII. DANSE DU VENTRE

Her vices to her cling.
There's blood that ſtains her mouth ;
Suspense of sense, a ſting
On all her body's drouth
Of blood-red colouring.

There's madness in her eyes,
Desire in her feet.
What is this luſts and lies ?
Her desires that meet
In rhythm of her feet.

Backward her frame she throws,
Her hands behind her back ;
Desire upon her grows ;
Her breaſts, each a red rose,
Know all her body knows ;
Her hair that's raven-black
Follows upon the track
Of all the ſtars that rise,
Rise with her ſterile throes ;
And on her face the fire
That wakes in her tiny feet
Excites her with its heat,
Expires in her desire.

She dances like a flame,
A wind-blown wanderer,

As her breasts dance with her ;
The roses shed their shame,
A shame that has no name ;

Always in her the soul
Cries with her discontent ;
Swathed in her Orient scent,
Her soul endures the whole
Of her heart's discontent.
Her limbs insatiable
Dance to the music's strings,
A dwarf arisen from hell
Plays on : such evil things
Draw the nerves out of strings.
And, as her moons advance,
She, moon-like, dares entrance
Hell's covered countenance
With her unholy dance.

Her body quivers, she
Quivers ; she turns and turns
On herself furiously ;
A fire within her burns
Her flesh inordinately ;
Desire within her burns
The flesh over her bones :
She on herself returns
As all her precious stones
Shake, flame, among her zones ;
Her desires drown the night
In the body's appetite.

Danse du Ventre

Her sense before her swims,
Her feet scarce touch the ground,
The rhythm of her limbs
As a lost star bedims
The sense of hollow sound
In the dull music drowned.
Rigid her eyes as death,
Rigid her ivory chin,
She swoons upon her breath,
She swoons upon her Sin.
And still her body moves,
The roses fall around ;
In the eyes of Herod, loves
Turn hates, and his rings ring
Upon his fingers thin.
Salome, shuddering,
Quivers, and falls a-heap
As a tormented thing ;
Her breasts, while throes on throes
Sting her, in fury leap ;
She, in her senses' mesh
Feels in her writhing heels
Stings of her naked flesh,
Stings of the locust's heat
Burn on her burning flesh,
She hears a voice that cries
On her Adulteries
Out of an open Pit
Stark on the Infinite,
Heard in the hush of the heat :
She swoons in a senseless sleep.

Now are the torches lit,
Tables are spread for the Feast;
The spokes of Fortune's wheels
Turn in the void of Time.
Herod, hot for his crime,
Drunken and shrunken, reels.
Herodias: "There sleeps the Beast"

VIII. THE DANCER'S REWARD

The anguish of an instant: her reward,
Salome's, who has danced the dance of Death.
Blood drips from the severed head of the Abhorred,
Venomous as viper's blood; on her lips, her breath
Divides them in a spasm; cruelty
Glares in her eyes; her hand holds like a sword
One lock of dead black hair that angrily
Revolts as snakes do in their tangled lair.
Ah, the death-agony of that dear dead mouth,
Salome's mouth, when it was living, adored!
Still the blood drips. O wind out of the south
Waft hellward that crescent on Salome's hair!
Ah, the sweet hell that, after her dancing, grips her!
That head of death; the terror of it grows
Upon her. O that mad folly of the Rose
That dances in her vision and that lips her!

July, 1920.

FOR DES ESSEINTES

I. RINGS

I HAVE a morbid fear of these my ancient rings.
Have I not found subtle poison in many a gem ?
This serpent, see how abominably he stings !
This opal that I love, more for its intricate flame
Than for its changing colours, shoots forth fires ;
This paler sapphire, Cesare Borgia's ring
That hid the translucent poison of desires
That eat one up beyond imagining :
Of these I endure the intolerable agonies.
Some die of them, some say, but I say no.
The spirit has more tenebrous maladies
Then the hard-hearted hearts of witches know.
Of certain stones I am hallucinated.
The Devil's in me ; and my intense luxury
Stings me like ardent fires that stir the dead :
Shall all these evil visions be the end of me ?

II. EYES

Why does this passion I have for passionate eyes consume me?
Morbid enough the attraction, as the fashions in season
Cause me amusement; there are some that with odours perfume me,
Not as the perfume of women. I know not the reason
Why these tastes should be different. Eyes have their fashion
Of seducing the very senses by the beauty of some of them;
Some are less beautiful, some more perverse in passion;
But in the eyes of the unfortunates, what shall become of them?
Spanish eyes more intense than their Christs in Crucifixions,
Eyes that love and that hate and that promise and refuse,
Eyes much more hateful and evil than maledictions;
Eyes of the treacherous Jewess and eyes of the Jew.
Eyes that are eyes of the masks, eyes that are poisonous,
Eyes of the morbid morphine-drunk women whose gazes
Drag at one's senses, drift in one's veins, eyes more ruinous
Than the rages that make them dilate; eyes that one praises
Just for the dream that is in them; eyes unforgiving,
Eyes of a spectre that withers and seems to hurt you;
Eyes of a singer on a stage, just alive, yet not living:
And the damnable gem-like eyes that turn Vice into Virtue.

III. KRANILE

Kranile surges before me in vision : her naked breasts,
The acrid odour of her sex, this perverted saint,
Hot with the heat of her flesh ; guests for her guests
The nudity of her flesh, her provoking paint ;
And in her eyes an agate that caresses her mouth
In its savage and saltless and wordless perversity ;
Haunches that ache with desire, her execrable youth
Of the beast pernicious, malicious, in bestiality ;
Knees abnormal that give one hallucination ;
She with her velvet veils, her Sabbatical soul ;
Violent in voluptuousness, weary of her dance's creation,
Dragging her culpable beauty to I know not what distant goal ;
Tired of being an idol adored, she in her frenzy begins
Gestures that symbolise Death. Ah, the intense obsession
She makes me shiver with ! She sins for her people's sins ;
Vicious not vain she makes of her body confession.
If she had only willed it, she the provoking
Creature that suffocates one by her savorous impurity,
Surely she had given herself to me when her flesh was smoking,
Healed me of some of my sins, given me some of my purity.
She the desire of my Flesh, she the desire of my Vices,
She alone loves me and hates me ; ah, her crudity
Of vision, she is vacant of vision, she is odorous of spices.
All of my nudity aches for her, she aches for my nudity.

IV. THE EVIL FACE

The terrible enigma of a tormented face,
All nerves and nervous beauty interrupted
By the intolerable stigmata of a grimace.
This sinister being has the aspect of one corrupted;
In his green eyes are hell, hell's flames reflected,
Eyes that can poison, eyes weary, eyes pernicious,
By lines more than Satanical intersected;
The loathsome mouth controls a certain rictus vicious;
A lean face showing the bones in one triangle,
Ears of a Criminal that no sins diminish;
Hands Ducal, ringed and painted, in the act to strangle
His equal one midnight; fingers that never finish
The gestures of their unutterable degradation;
This actor in Life's Tragedy haunts you with his evil
Insinuations, as if an actual strangulation
Leapt from the brain to the body: an inimical Devil
Sits in his chair consumed with the intensity
Of one who drugs himself, of one who knows his peril,
Of one who lingers lovingly over his obscenity.
When his eyes open in Hell, they'll say: "All's sterile!"

V. TRAGIC DAWN

There surged before me the dawn's translucent fires,
For she I loved had left me and I was alone.
In the depths of the midnight I had seen the Unknown.
Astarte was there, the unhated goddess of desires.
And I had seen a spider caught in seven wires
And a gigantic fly no wind had ever blown,
But never to me was the heart of the midnight shown.
The Spirit is never tired but the Soul in me tires.

And in the midst of the flames I was suddenly aware
Of a flame-bird that fluttered on feverish wings
And the night was no longer there nor the night of her hair.
And I was more lonely than God in the heart of things.
When shall the last dawn come with cloudy chariotings ?
I shall awake perhaps after that and not find you there.

VI. PERDITION

Why have I never loved? Is it that I am abnormal,
Condemned for my sins, not as some in absurd concavity
Think that the world's a concave? Perhaps I deform all
My senses alight into a form of depravity.
Always the prey of ignoble instincts, always vibrating
At the touch of flesh on my flesh, ah! nervous vibration
That gives me such learned desires of insanely creating
Death into life, an abominable kind of creation
Outside the limits of nature where nature's most sterile,
As on the beds of hired women I wake to remind me
Annihilation awaits me, or some more infamous peril
Shot from a mad girl's eyes, as if some one behind me
Stood in the midnight to stab me, and I was forsaken
Even of myself, lost in caresses, lost in sedition,
Saved in no sense, but hurled half way down to Perdition!

VII. SUNSETS

The sullen sunsets burn my senses with their flames
And all their changing colours mixed with my desires
Turn into writhing serpents whose intolerable shames
Poison one's innocent blood, shoot shafts of fires
Out of the Seven Hells' regions where knights and dames
Hold converse, dance and mime, and string their lyres,
And hear, in glittering cages, sinister birds that call their names.

And as I wake and wander always these are woven
With my most feverish dreams, the heat of midnight cloven
With feet of fire, hell's lightning and hell's thunder
That mix and mingle in a perilous confusion;
And over and above me, mists of disillusion,
That, as the heart of darkness opens, are rent asunder.

May 1, 11, 1919.

THE CHIMERA:

NOTRE-DAME

The Chimera created by the Eternal Hours,
Seized by the perverse passion of Rabelais,
Disguised in Satan of the Eternal Towers
Of Notre-Dame that rule the night and day,
Himself destructive, his own self devours
His living flesh, this Bird of Evil Prey,
Lean as a lenten Monk, nor rains nor showers
Ever refresh: his one Desire to slay
The misbegotten child that the First Sin
Conceived from the body of primeval Lust;
Only his eyes, that see but from within,
Gloat over Paris. Shrivelled to the skin,
Hooded and clawed, his feet grind down the Dust.

Paris, *June* 14, 1921.

LE STRIGE

Le Strige is the only Symbol of our Sexual Vices,
A Demon winged with wind and with wild despair,
A hell-born Demon from the dire Infernal Lair
Of Satan, where the air is perfumed with subtle spices.

Deep in his eyes that dream of hidden Paradises
An ancestral anger burns ; his snake's tongue bites the air ;
Horned with his hate and crowned with jewels rare,
His vampire's Soul consumes itself with fruitless sacrifices.

His wings that never wave, his deadly venomous head,
His naked flesh half hidden by the sheer stone parapet,
Cheeks hollow his five fingers clutch support his chin :
His vision seizes Paris. What does his Demon's heart regret ?
Infinite Weariness, yea, as infinite as our Sin.
On the Void's Verge, there fly before him multitudes of the Dead.

Paris, *June* 14, 1921.

CHIMERA—CALIBAN

An ignominious monster and uncouth
Who crouches in a Satanic attitude,
The naked parody of some vital truth
Concealed from that huge howling multitude
That whirls forever on the winds and storms
And in the silence of the desert brood.
This inchoate being the vast night deforms
And he is covetous of men's spilt blood;
A creature fashioned of the Nile's slime and mud
That has no thought but to be there alive,
Alive under no hawk's nor night owl's hood;
He has forgotten all but how to strive
In vain against the God's hostility;
A Caliban who has not the art to thrive
On the mere nothing his feet are fast upon—
A monstrous stone once hewn in Babylon—
Half featureless and utterly insane,
There where he crouches just held by his feet
From falling headlong on the noiseless street;
A thing without the atom of a brain
To fathom his abominable nudity.
Who made him? Some mad monster of a man
Whose mind conceived this nightmare, Caliban.

Paris, *June* 19, 1921.

JEZEBEL MORT

My name is Jezebel Mort: you know the thing that that means;
If ever one comes into Court, they call us pleasure-machines.
Aye, for men were we made, and men were made for our sex:
Sordid and base our trade; there's more than our trade to vex
Even such simple souls with the thought of life and of death:
For the devil, we know, plays bowls, and can whistle away our breath.
Nay, none were born a saint, for we were born on the earth
To be tainted by sin's taint; some girls of us even from birth
Had it just in their blood: sin, the veritable sin,
That drenches one in the mud, up from the knee to chin,
And leaves another a slut, base-born of a chimney-sweep:
Heaven knows the reason, but angels never did weep.

I was born in a room in a hideous bawdy-house,
Conceived in my mother's womb on the midnight of some carouse;
That was likely enough. No sooner was I of age
To know the price of the stuff that such as we know as the wage

Paid in money or lust, than I walked in the street ;
Flesh and bones, and a pinch of dust, and at last a winding-sheet !
Then comes, after this, drink, and drink one finds quite nice ;
Then or before, I think, was one's absolute knowledge of vice :
Vice in the nature of us. Yes, in the innocent ones,
Just as calamitous, as vice in the veins of their sons.
Vice, I tell you, is in all ; is a virtue to some, perhaps.
We, girls after our fall, are caught in sinister traps,
Just as they snare the birds ; for brute men are snares, I say,
Not in their uttered words, but men-devils cast in our way
By the fiends in hell ; aye, for their fiendish luxury.

Well, we are all to sell : one for her beauty, you see,
One for the lust of her eyes : these for their sensual lips ;
And for other things men prize more than one's casual slips.
One of us maybe gives herself as a very slave
To the man for whom she lives ; and before her one digs a grave.
But for all that one thinks of one's heart (that beats on the left side).
We are sold in the mart, where men bargain from eventide
Till the very Judgment-Day ; so one imagines, at least.

Now in the hospital grey, whose walls were built by no priest,
Where, a white glare shines in on one's very self in one's bed,
Drifting over one's skin, touching the hair on one's head ;

Well, there's an end for me ; just perhaps, where, there, nod
Branches of a barren tree : and, this night, I go to my God.

Moll Boswell.

Dead she is as the just, she that walked in the street :
Flesh and bones, and a pinch of dust, and at last a winding sheet !

September 4, 1914.

THE SEEDS OF VICE

He heard the hooting of an Owl,
It hooted twice, it hooted thrice.
There floated across a thought as foul
As when the Devil tosses the Dice
In Hell whose floor is paved with Vice.
The owl hooted out of a wood—
It froze the currents of his blood.
The owl hooted out of a Tree.
The Soul in me said unto me :
" Heardst thou the hooting of the Owl ? "
It hooted thrice, it hooted twice ;
It clove the passion of the wood ;
It was heard in Hell where the seeds of Vice
Turn to ice, in the Serpent's blood ;
It wakened the Toad out of his hole,
It stirred the passionate heart of the Fire
(Last night the Fire created his Soul,
A god-like soul, of his God's desire) ;
In a lull of the wind his voice was thinned
As the foam is thinned by the angry Sea.
" O Soul, what sin hast thou sinned ? "
I said to my soul that had spoken to me,
As the fire flamed and the ruinous root
Of the earth upheaved itself from the clods.
The wind was wild, the owl did hoot,
The Devil laughed at his cloven foot ;

The Seeds of Vice

The owl it hooted twice and thrice;
The poisonous flower of the seeds of Vice
Grew and grew in the night without light.
Still the owl hooted: the nerves of the Night
Cried in my side; and the seeds that are God's
Trampled the weeds out of Paradise.

September 18, 1920.

THE AVENGING SPIRIT

So you have drugged me with this poisoned wine
Because I never loved you ; trees writhe grim
Around us and their mockery makes malign
Your gestures and the ardour of each limb
I have seen naked, I have known divine ;
Your eyes, fatal as death's, where I see swim
Dead ghosts of spent desires. O sorrows nine
That are mine own ! Am I not vowed to Him
Who stalks there in the shadow of that pine,
Now that the virginless Moon is vestal, dim,
As Hades ? Ah ! that mirror that is thine,
That sees the Lampads dip over the rim
Of the round world ; mirror, nay, no more mine,
Than to his Hell the hell-born Teraphim.

Hell-born you are not, daughter of some Hell
Wherein forever burns the infernal fire,
For in your body is the inevitable
Sting of the Serpent made of the Snake's desire,
The desire he had of Lilith, whose strange spell
Woven around him made his breath respire
The odours of no death, not damnable,
But deadly when the blood that's mixed with mire
Propagates evil. You the Insensible
Beast of the Wilderness where root and briar
Mix, and the ways thereof no man can tell,
Jungles and forests, lion's lust and ire :
Now, what shall leap on me from a sunken well ?
You, you, that glitter in your golden wire !

The Night I know shall nestle in your hair
And the night's birds shall bite you furiously,
And even were your body thin and bare
As when you loved me most, when all the Sea
Of passion surged across us and the air
Shot wicked lightnings, hell's, ironically,
And hurled dead leaves upon us : we were aware
Of certain subtle Loves that daintily
Slid over grasses greener than the vair
You women wear, and eyed us mockingly—
Seeing how mad our love was—laughed a rare
Laughter that shook our senses as you and me
Lay linked together and your hair my hair
Held fast. They passed, leaving us nakedly

As love must be, and without any Shame
We gazed upon each other in surprise.
These, having passed, I called you by your name :
Lamia ! And all the malice in your eyes
Darkened with a veritable flame—
The flame the Sun has when he crucifies
Himself—only, in you, always the same
Irresistible irritation that denies
Nothing, gives all things, playing Sin's own game
Before the horror of the naked skies
That shuddered on us, knew—the thing that came.

And when the night was over, then we rose
And came upon a wicked piece of Earth.
Thessalian witches, writhing in strange throes,
With convulsed limbs, with some Satanic mirth

Evoked the Demons. Ah, the venomous dose
Of poison in their eyes and in their girth!
Nay, the snake only his own venom knows;
I think that then you had a second birth.
That gave you the desire to poison me
That grew in you just then and quickened so,
Till, knowing your guilt, your evil Sorcery
Changed on itself; and I that was your Foe
Before my wrath changed to love and came to be
That thing of things you know, the thing I know,
Death-doomed; yea, to be severed angrily
From life and lust and in the dust bow low
This haughty head; you, very suddenly
Tried to destroy the poison; yea, by slow
Soft processes, to avert the ignominy
Of your incarnate spirit. Lo, now, lo,
Now that I die, what hell-spume of the sea
The wind of your breath makes evil about me, so
As your arms hold me? I see Death's sinister face
Between the window-panes, and I must go.

There is a stirring in the wind that wakes
Out of their sleep the beasts that love the wood.
Lo, this avenging Spirit of mine, that slakes
Its thirst upon the famishing multitude
Your breath must famish on! O snake of snakes,
By all the agony of the Holy Rood
That for our sakes its mortal coil forsakes,
Here's my last kiss: You have slain my spirit's blood!

July 10, 1920.

MAD SONG

They say that I am mad.
I worship the Abhorred
And O the ways I had
Of banishing the Lord!
I hate the passing fashion
But not the moving crowds;
If Satan gives me passion
I wander with the clouds.

Often at night alone
Before the sunset bars
I see upon his throne
The Monarch of the Stars.
The hot noon bites me harder,
Midnight sheds on me blisses.
She comes, to fan my ardour,
She kills me with her kisses.

Night passes into day,
We the night watches keep;
When on our bed we lay
My dear began to weep,
And then she burst out sobbing:
"My dear, when we are dead,
Yea, when our nerves are throbbing,
I shall find the old kisses shed

Upon my serpent-mouth.
Nay, what is death to us?
Madness and sadness, youth,
Sin's garden ruinous,
Warm winds upon us blowing,
Our lips upon the flowers,
The sins our sins were sowing
Pass with the eternal hours."

So did the dear lips move
As I leaned over her,
She, she, my only love,
I felt her pulses stir.
We like two riven fires
Did suddenly possess,
She, all of my desires,
And I, her loveliness.

Then did our nights begin
Insidiously to mesh
Our flesh that feels the sin
Transfixing flesh to flesh.
Our souls met in derision,
Our bodies clave asunder—
Mine was the rarer vision,
Hers was the rarer wonder.

They say that I am mad;
You never said that thing:
God knows the ways we had
In our nerve-shuddering.

Mad Song

That shudder that ran through you!
Hell's madness in mine eyes!
God knows, you know, I slew you,
Where the earth in anguish cries.

On the wind's wings up to Heaven
After the dawn I rise,
Then downwards I am driven
By clouds that storm the skies.
I seek for her where the scowling
Fiends dive deep down in a well:
On the wings of madness howling
I plunge and I find not Hell.

July 11, 1922.

THE CRUCIFIX AND THE OWL

That unutterable Agony on the Crucifix
Of Jesus Christ the hideous Jews decried
Rent night asunder; seethed the sullen Styx,
Sad Lethe murmured where the reeds transfix
The invisible winds; then He, the Crucified,
Nailed by the cruel nails, the wound in His side
That bled, His feet that bled, His head whose pride
Was more than man's, His brow the thorns did mix
With drops of blood, heard the hooting of an Owl:
The Owl who when the wan moon, the sun's Bride,
Begins to shine, inevitably hoots.
Nothing he fears, not even the earth's roots,
He fears not lightning nor the clouds that scowl.
The Christ who loved him, panted, then he sighed;
So sighed beneath him Mary Magdalen.
At the ninth hour the ghost within him died.
The Owl was silent and no God replied:
At the ninth hour the Owl hooted again.

September 17, 1921.

THE IMPENETRABLE

I AM of all men the most Impenetrable.
Some say that I am cold as any stone.
The way of those that go down quick to Hell
Is not my way: with mine own Self alone
I go at the wind's wild will where none can tell
The secret of my Soul. Before God's throne
I bend my knees, I adore the miracle
Of His Son Jesus. Backward the gates are thrown
Of Hell where Satan in His supreme pride
Gazes into the mirror of mine eyes,
The clouded mirror of my Destinies,
In whose deep depths the untroubled ghosts abide.
Some say that I have fathomed mine own Hell.
I am of all men the most Impenetrable.

August 18, 1921.

SONNET

The Serpent that was born in Paradise,
God knows, rejoiced when the gift of grace was given
You, the most passionately perfect of the seven
Fallen angels; for your desecrated eyes
Are haunted by the beryl's mysteries.
I know that Satan claimed you from the riven
Ranks of the Virgins that deserted heaven.
God has no part in you, not in any wise.

Yea, why should God, seeing that you are lost,
Not by the scented devils of your pride?
Now at the mercy of the Teraphims
You are hurled onward by the wandering host
Of winds that in the Midnight's heart abide
Naked between the Dragon's writhing limbs.

July 9, 1922.

THE WANDERER'S LAMENT

Why am I fettered with eternal change?
I follow after changeless love, and find
Nothing but change; I seek, and seem to find,
And find I have lost, and follow after love,
Seeking in passionate humility.
I find a shaken star within a pool;
A little water troubles it, I lean
Closer, and mine own shadow blots it out.
Yet I desire the star, not this bright ghost.
I take a woman's heart into my hand;
It sighs for love, and trembles among sighs,
And half awakens into a delicate sleep,
And calls to me in whispers out of dreams.
Then the dream passes, and I too know I have dreamed.
Why is it that the world was made so ill,
Or we that suffer it, or this soul its toy,
This body that is the image of the world,
Made ill, or made for a pastime: he that made it
Loved not the thing he made, or tired of it,
Or could not end it; for he gave us life,
And the body; and therewith he gave us dreams;
And having made one substance of the soul
And body, wrought division, and flung his war
Into the little passionate city of man.
I desire love, I desire only love,
For I am lonelier than the wandering sea,
And I could be more constant than the tide;

And one by one, I seek a lonely soul
And then a lonely soul, and every soul
Leans to me beckoning out of a little heaven,
And cries me a joyous cry, welcoming me,
And sighs farewell amid inexorable tears.
No woman has found me faithless ; it is she
Who shows me mine own image in her eyes,
And in mine own eyes finds a shadowy friend
That is her own desire beholding her.
All leave me, for the world's sake or for love's,
Because a dream is stronger than desire,
Because the world is stronger than a dream,
Because a soul has feared the face of joy,
Seeing it aflame with unendurable laughter ;
And I am mine own rival, and I pass
Upon the cold and endless journeying,
Hopeless in all the mockery of hope.
What shall the end of all things be ? I wait
Cruel old age, and kinder death, and sleep.

1904.

THE HOUSE

"WHY do you batter down the walls of my house?"
I shouted to one as I stood on the top of my roof.
He stopped his battering and said with an air of reproof:
"I always hated you because you stand aloof,
And because you sit drinking wine in the shadow of the boughs."

At that there arose a clamour of the crows
And all the air was darkened with their wings.
I lifted the wine to my lips in a heavenly drowse.
And then I cast off all thought of material things.
So he that hated the clamour of the crows
Stopped, slept, and left off battering at my house.

October 30, 1921.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

All my wealth I would give,
I would give all my fame,
For a woman who would kiss me
And call me by my name.

But I, with my fame in the world,
In the world am all alone;
And I, who have wealth, have nothing
That I can call my own.

And, as I drive along,
Seated triumphantly,
God knows how often I envy
The beggar who envies me.

For, in the mud of the street,
That my wheels cast up as I go,
He laughs to his wife in the gutter,
And she laughs to him even so.

All my wealth I would give,
I would give all my fame,
If there were one woman to kiss me
And call me by my name.

October 16, 1893.

FOR A CHRISTENING

Find your own future, friend, in his,
And so be comforted
If you should think on what it is
To be old, grey or dead.
But what avails it if I save
Yet one more memory
For silent age and the deaf grave
Whose future ends with me?

Birchington-on-Sea, *August* 5, 1897.

GIPSY MOTHER'S SONG

I GATHER the crackling sticks in the wood,
And I roast the hedgehog over the fire;
My little one shall have dainty food,
As much as her little heart can desire.

My little one shall have ribbons red,
And great gold ear-rings, a locket of gold,
And a red and gold shawl for her little head,
And I'll buy her a doll when the baskets are sold.

I'll steal for my little one, some fine day,
A little white dog with a ribbon and bell;
When I've sold the trinkets on all my tray,
I'll buy her a bird in a cage as well.

O! a bird in a cage is each little one
That runs to the window to see us pass;
My little one loves to lie in the sun,
And chirp to the horse as he munches the grass.

July, 1896.

THE WINDOW

Looking through a narrow window day by day
They behold the world go by on holiday;
Maid to man repeating "Love me while you may,"
All go by them, none returns to them: they stay.

They behold love pass, and life passing away,
And each day puts on the face of yesterday,
And their hearts are sighing "Love me while you may,
Love is lovely, life is passing: 'tis to-day."

All shall be to-morrow, still the elders say;
Many lenten morrows come and pass away,
And the world goes by, and as of old time they
Looking through a narrow window watch the way.

1900.

ROMAN ELEGIES

I. VILLA BORGHESE

In this dim alley of the ilexes
I walk in a delicious loneliness.
The plaintive water of the fountain drips
Like silence speaking out of a God's lips,
And like chill silence visible, I see
A faint smoke breathing upward mistily
Where dead leaves rise in incense, their sweet death,
Toward the frail life of dying leaves. The breath
Of that decay which is more delicate
Than the white breath of Spring, the lonely state
Of lilies breathing in a quiet place,
Sweetens the air. I feel against my face,
Moist, stealthy, blown from where the leaves are thinned,
The kisses of the winter, in pale wind.

II. VILLA PAMPHILI

The daisies whiten the warm grass :
I see the sun, a shadow, pass :
And I forget that winter was.

The black rooks call across the sky :
The black-robed scholar-priests go by :
About the grass pale children lie.

All sorrowful and cloistered things,
As if this sunlight were the Spring's,
Desire the ecstasy of wings.

And even my soul, long used to grope
Within its self-entangled scope,
Dreams of the opening wings of hope.

III. ON THE PALATINE

I HAVE lived, loved, and lost; I crave
Nothing again of all life gave;
I only crave to find
Oblivion for the mind.

As one who leaps into bright death
Where the sea shudders underneath,
To escape the fellowship
Of his confined ship;

So I, from this heart's crowded home,
Sink into the eternal Rome.
If these waves wash me down,
I am content to drown.

IV. IN THE PACE

This is the church of Peace.
O Sibyls of the East and West,
Teach me your secret, to release
With ancient wisdom that old rest
Which is in heaven called peace.

A wanderer in Rome
I wait the unknown hour, I wait,
Where other wanderers have come,
Before that ever-open gate
Which is on earth called Rome.

I do not see the way;
I wait, and turn my waiting eyes,
In patience toward the hope of day.
O Sibyls, show me, you are wise,
Your wisdom, and the way!

Rome, 1897.

TOWNS

I HAVE come back from the wide sea,
To breathe the narrow dust again,
In cities, where men cumber men.
Why is it that I dare not be
Alone with Nature? Coming near
The light and peace of her austere
Regard, I am filled with shameful fear.

What is this thing the towns have made,
Into their likeness made anew,
Until we know not star or dew?
We are afraid of light, afraid
Of windy space, and naked skies,
And all in heaven and earth that lies
Beyond this prison of our eyes.

1903.

THE HEART

Why are you kind to me now,
You who were once so unkind?
I will tell you why you are kind to me now.

Now you have taken away
All that I had, you are kind;
You have taken the dreams of my heart away.

I had nothing, only my dreams:
You have found them, hid in my heart;
You have taken nothing, only my dreams.

You are kind to me now I am poor,
I have nothing left in my heart,
You are kind to me only because I am poor.

July 5, 1900.

THE HOURS

Why is it that the hour of the clock
Points to the hour behind, before,
Never the perfect hour whose stroke
My soul heard strike, and waited for?

The hour I heard was mine and yours,
The world's hour struck, but was not ours;
Must we remain, while time endures,
The adversaries of the hours?

I will put back the clock and wait,
For what is time but haste of breath?
Is it too soon, is it too late?
Will the hour, when it strikes, be Death?

August 9, 1900.

THE HEART OF A MAN

You say that you love me,
And why should we ever part?
Do you think to move me
With words that I know by heart?

Be strange and cruel,
Blow cold, you will fan desire:
For love's no fuel,
But love we know is the fire.

Feign but denial,
Forego, forget if you can;
And then make trial
Of what's in the heart of a man.

December 19, 1906.

THE SCARLET SUN

Who shall quench the soul's desire
Of the moth, that is God's fire?
Who shall with a painted cloth
Stain the bright wings of the moth?
Who shall with an evil foot
Stamp the life out of a root?
Who shall turn upon his heel
And bid the scarlet sun to reel?
None, for none shall know his hour
To flout the beauty of a flower.

February 11, 1920.

WATER-WEEDS

What is this that flies with night
On the wings of the night-birds?
Ghost of love, endless delight,
Night's inarticulate words—
Come, where water-weeds are cool,
Dip your fingers in the pool.

Midnight on high Ararat,
In the serpent's spirit noon,
Whirlwind on his wings of bat,
Spider's webs that shred the moon—
Come, where water-weeds are cool,
Dip your fingers in the pool.

Lights that do the night illume,
Ghostly shapes upon the grass,
Demon's hands that weave the loom
Of the wan Herodias—
Come, where water-weeds are cool,
Dip your fingers in the pool.

Between heaven and hell a bridge,
Hecate strangles in a moat
Wicked wasp and malign midge,
Moat where dead sea-lilies float—
Come, where water-weeds are cool,
Dip your fingers in the pool.

July 31, 1921.

A WINTER DIRGE

The heath has withered on the moor,
Here at the wan sea's edge
I hear the thundering breakers roar;
Against the tortured hedge
I lean and hear the wind that wails
As if a child had cried.
Far off I see the shifting sails
That strive with wind and tide.
And, stranger than all human speech
Or any woman's sigh,
I hear the waves beat on the beach
And the sea-gull's cry.

January 11, 1920.

THE WASPS

The wasps are buzzing, the earth smells,
I love to hear them when they buzz,
The merchant wasps that build their cells;
Their merchandise miraculous
They dig for, and those tiny things,
So voluble in their loveliness,
Who have for those that hate them, stings,
Garbed in a green and golden dress,
Rise from their City on their wings,
Bear with them bits of earth, compress
Desire into their daintiness.

July 17, 1921.

THE NIGHT OWL

I HEAR the little Owl shriek
Along the windless ways,
As if its inhuman soul were fain to seek
The heart of the mystery of its days;
And as I hear the beat of its wings
That shriek to mine own Spirit clings.

It shrieks as the moon's shadow sways
Over the shaken grass,
And something strange in the Owl's soul sighs Alas

And God, I think, before the heavens scowl
Blesses the little night Owl.

August 17, 1921.

A MASQUE OF SHADOWS

Poor helpless Shadow of Deceit,
The shadow of no magic flower,
I find you, Helen, in the street
This unanointed sacred hour:
Here where the dust of trodden feet
Desecrates the street.

This very hour that consecrates
All that the night could never keep
Menaces what our changeless Fates
Leave to us in our dreamless sleep:
Knave Menelaus desecrates
The folly of our Fates.

Only, before the night grows thin
About us in our city-street,
What is the sin that we must sin,
Helen, when dawn and darkness meet?
Fine webs of passion our souls spin
Out of their own deceit.

O lie with me on the naked grass
In uttermost abandonment,
Drink in the naked winds that pass,
Drink deep of the passion of their scent,
The scent of the Sea that sighs alas!
My Helen's scent!

You came to me from the seventh gate
Of that fire-doomed and deathless Troy,
O passion-pale and passionate,
O flesh most fair, mad to destroy
That flesh that you are mad to hate,
Mad to destroy.

Over bright Paris lies the dust,
And we are here and we must love
Until our Love transfigures Lust,
Then taste the poisoned scent thereof,
As on the gallows a man upthrust
Feeds on his Lust.

August 5, 1921.

GRIEF

The wind shook not in grass nor leaf,
I had lain down with Perfect Grief,
Not yet had come that angry thief
Night that gives Passion some relief.

I was more shaken than the grass,
I heard the voice of the winds that pass,
Then was unveiled Time's looking-glass,
The wan face of Herodias.

The sun was heavy with his heat,
His shadows lay upon my feet,
My blood within me began to beat.
The snake said: "Where is the Serpent's meat?"

October 7, 1921.

THE ALCOVE

I HEARD the trampling feet
Of the whole Earth
Shake with ironic mirth
The evil houses in an evil street.
And as I onward went
The loud carouse
Of the wicked women in an evil house
Came to me like an alcove's heated scent.

October 2, 1921.

SONG

Why write in images like Donne?
There is no Iris in the room
To scatter roses and perfume
In the house of John.

All ye that live in Babylon
Beware of any harlot's tomb
The dust of the centuries consume
Under the sway of the sun.

June 29, 1921.

INSTANTANE

TO DONNA MARIA GALLESE

To a lady with golden hair on seeing her with flowers in winter

The street was sunless till you came,
Then the sunlight of your hair,
When you looked at me, became
Sunshine in the pallid air.

The world was flowerless till you came,
Flower with slim flowers blossoming;
Winter, seeing you, became,
Suddenly, with you, the Spring.

Rome, *January* 10, 1897.

TO A WOMAN SEEN IN SLEEP

Once seen, immortal, seen but in a dream,
Unveiling that white swiftness to the feet,
With pride of maiden shame,
I have beheld the youth of Beauty gleam,
August, and passionately sweet,
And shining as clear flame.

There is a wonder in all beauty's youth,
And I have sought but youth in beauty; now
I know, with altered soul,
I have but loved some hand, some cheek, some mouth,
And circumscribed with some white brow
The uncapturable whole.

This is the face that makes the old world young,
For this the world has withered in a kiss
Of so consuming fire;
This is the song that poets have all sung,
The lover's first-born prayer, and this
The saint's last-slain desire.

Tillyra Castle, *Augus* 15, 1896.

TO IRIS

Lucrezia Borgia's evil face,
Framed by her orange sunset hair,
Shows in each trace of its grimace,
Blood-red, the stigmata of her race.
So when the world was wan for air,
And God looked on, great Satan fell
Into the depth of that abyss
That naked lies between Heaven and Hell.
Red sensual lips mad for the kiss
Of Cesare when his arteries
Burn with the heat unutterable
Of his desires, of her desires;
That thin pure oval of the chin,
Those perverse eyes whose inner fires
Are hell's, wherein sin hides by sin,
And have no sense of aught therein
Save what one hears when lutes and lyres
Sound together in a scented room,
A room in the Vatican in Rome;
Strange eyes that shed such strange perfume
As when some girl returning home
Shakes off her perfume, to resume
Her other self. O poisonous fume
Of earth's hell in this flower whereon
Each separate petal's poisonous
As weeds that suck the blood from one,
As vampires that abhor the sun.
O God's weed, made more glorious
In paint, than weeds, this paint of John!

June 7, 1920.

NIGHTMARE

Seven devils in my head
Hurry me from bed to bed.

In this bed I lie awake
In the embraces of a snake.

In this bed the lions keep
Watch around me while I sleep.

In this bed the angels ten
Call on Mary Magdalen.

In this bed the nightmares creep
Out of the arms of sudden sleep.

On this bed the spiders spin
Webs to catch the souls that sin.

On this bed the fires that dwell
In hell have risen out of hell.

On his bed I hear the toll
That bids me render up my soul.

O seven devils on my bed,
Save me from the living dead!

August 18, 1921.

TREES IN PARIS

The pining leaves that only know the light
Of Paris gas by night,
The leaves that hunger for the harvest moon
And sunny birds that croon
Among the branches rocking in the breeze—
The piteous boulevard trees,
How can they drink the day or night across
Such memories of loss?
All day they dream of sunlight such as yields
Its rapture to the fields;
Of streams that curl about the roots now grown
Half brother to the stone;
And all the night they long for the cool gleams
The moonlight lays on streams.
All that they see, instead of flocks and herds,
And happy flights of birds,
Is the long dull mechanic flow of feet
Through lengths of jostling street;
The wheels that turn behind the patient horse
Upon his weary course;
And all the human faces dull and base,
Face after tedious face.

This is the fate of trees that know the light
Of Paris gas by night.

Paris, *June* 27, 1896.

HYMN TO EARTH

I

There is no airy bridge, no corridor,
That leads me from the prison where I dwell,
In one dim narrow cell,
Into the world that I have hungered for,
Ceaselessly from my birth:
There is no way between the soul and Earth.
We live by sight: what is it that I see?
I turn, a narrow circle turns with me.
What is it that I hear? I cannot hear
The voice of the immeasurable sea
Speaking these few poor furlongs from my ear.
I move, and all my little world moves too,
Trailing about me like a cloak: alack,
I do but bear my prison on my back,
As snails that travel do.

II

I will cry out, and bid Earth answer me;
Vainly I cry, and vainly seek to know
The secret way she goes, or what may be
The secret way I go.
Sometimes I seem to hear a voice that sighs
Out of the silence, saying: Trouble me not
With idle questionings;
Am I not silent in all mortal things?

Has any voice once spoken from the skies?
Think thou, as I, thy solitary thought;
Trouble me not.

III

Yet there is beauty, real as a pain
In this inconstant show of green and blue,
That, like the unfelt air, I travel through,
Yet closes round me like the air again.
This carpet the smooth grass,
These azure hangings laced with silken white,
This leafy rustle, this bright watery stir,
All colours of the day and night,
That come, and are forgotten, and so pass,
Are they not each a delicate minister
And patient handmaid of delight?
Shadows they are, and shadows that I make
They may be: what am I?
I hear an echo and a voice reply
A dreamer dreaming that he is awake.

Earth out of which I came,
Red earth to which I go,
When I resign this name,
Whereby myself I know,
Mother and stranger and foe,
Shall there be any making friends at last
When this illimitable thirst and lust
Goes down into the dust?

Not living, then not dead,
Shall I be comforted
By the Earth I never knew in all the past.
There is no way,
Not though I feed the lilies, or refresh
The life of roses with my flesh,
Nay,
There is not any way, through death or birth,
Between the soul of man and Earth.

1902.

Printed in Great Britain by Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ld.,
London and Aylesbury.